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Fifty-second Session

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New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: The first speaker this afternoon is the Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal and for Senegalese people living abroad, His Excellency Mr. Moustapha Niasse.

Mr. Niasse (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The General Assembly has unanimously chosen you, Mr. President, to guide the work of the fifty-second session. This decision is a tribute to your outstanding personal qualities as a diplomat and a statesman, and at the same time a tribute to your vast experience in international relations. It also shows how much the international community appreciates the role played by your country, Ukraine, in the management of the major issues that characterize the evolution of world affairs. My country is pleased to express to you its warmest congratulations and best wishes for success in the execution of this noble mission.

I would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for the competence and open-mindedness with which he guided the work of the fifty-first session of our General Assembly. We extend to him our deep gratitude.

I would like to extend to the new Secretary-General of our Organization, Mr. Kofi Annan, my warmest congratulations. The election of Mr. Kofi Annan last 17 December was a tribute to the exceptional qualities of a man who has devoted his entire life to United Nations causes. I wish him every success in the important mission entrusted to him. I am convinced that he will do honour to our continent, Africa, and successfully lead our Organization into the next millennium.

The world's family of nations is once again meeting, as it does every year, to examine the current situation and, at the same time, to chart the course of progress for the 12 months to come.

While making its contribution to this exercise in collective reflection, my country, Senegal, would like to associate itself with all of those who find hope for a better future for humankind in our Organization, because it is based on peace and solidarity.

In fact, the United Nations remains an irreplaceable instrument for the promotion of peace, security and progress in the world, thanks to its universal character, to the international culture and ethics that it expresses and inspires and to its positive accomplishments.

Two years ago, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the international community stressed here, unanimously, the irreplaceable nature of the framework for reflection, discussion, synthesis and coordination of international life that the

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United Nations provides. In fact, the United Nations has been and remains a multidimensional symbol. The United Nations is, first, an indispensable tool for safeguarding global peace and security. Further, the United Nations is above all a source of new hope for many men and women who suffer from exile, hunger, poverty or illness. And lastly, the United Nations is a tool for the promotion of democracy, human rights and development — in other words, of justice among individuals, peoples, cultures and civilizations.

In this light, we have made it one of our highest priorities to improve the capacities and the ability of the Organization to better tackle the challenges of today's world. We have done so while affirming that

> "In order to be able to respond effectively to the challenges of the future and the expectations of the United Nations held by peoples around the world, it is essential that the United Nations itself be reformed and modernized." *(Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations, resolution 50/6, para. 14)*

We are pleased to note today that this conviction has begun to be reflected in deeds. In fact, led by the dynamism of our Secretary-General, the United Nations has now embarked on a vast reform effort, unprecedented in the history of this institution.

More specifically, on 16 July last Mr. Kofi Annan submitted to the General Assembly proposals for reforms that will make the United Nations the cornerstone of an international system better adapted to the realities of the twenty-first century.

I would like to express all my gratitude to the Secretary-General and his collaborators for the commendable efforts and energy that they have applied to the development of proposals as bold as they are relevant.

Senegal is now examining all these proposals in close coordination with its fellow members of the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Non-Aligned Movement. Senegal will do this while bearing in mind the political will expressed by all to undertake, within an appropriate time period, the necessary reforms, especially in the fields of development, maintenance of international peace and security, disarmament and promotion of human rights, so that the Organization can better respond to the demands of our day and to the aspirations of the peoples for which it was created.

The Head of State of Senegal, His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, has already provided the necessary guidelines and resources for this examination.

In this framework, the reform of the Security Council requires the special attention of all Member States and, at the same time, a common will to be faithful to the ideal of peace that was inscribed in the Charter in San Francisco in 1945.

The Working Group charged with examining this question has made considerable progress, even though consensus has yet to be found on such fundamental issues as expansion, composition and use of the veto in the Security Council.

Nonetheless, we can and must underscore, welcome and support the many constructive and often complementary proposals that have been submitted and that have visibly enriched the debates over the course of the past year.

We now must stay on track and redouble our efforts in order to take advantage of the momentum thus established and to succeed ultimately in our objective of restructuring the Security Council while modernizing it, making it more democratic and giving it greater credibility and greater transparency — and thus greater legitimacy.

Africa has a natural role to play in this reform, a role that must be recognized given Africa's historical evolution and its destiny as a continent of the future in the community of nations.

The reform of the United Nations system towards greater coherence and greater dynamism is important, but equally urgent is the need for the maintenance and promotion of peace in the world.

It is true that significant progress has been made in this area in recent years. Thus, the United Nations has succeeded in substantially strengthening its capacity to plan, establish and conduct peacekeeping missions throughout the world. My country, Senegal, is pleased to have been able to contribute to this progress, through, *inter alia*, the posting of officers from its army to the Secretariat in New York so that the various aspects of peacekeeping operations could be better rationalized.

But the desired improvement should not be limited to procedural matters, even though we must recognize that these matters are clearly important.

Above all, we must also re-examine the orientation of United Nations missions in all cases in which peace in the world is threatened or breached.

The international community must, in particular, be more realistic in the missions it confers upon the United Nations Blue Helmets.

In this context, drawing lessons from operations such as that conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we must recognize something quite clear: by the rules of engagement established for them, the United Nations forces are not yet legally equipped to restore peace in theatres of operation where peace has been broken.

Therefore, it seems to us more appropriate to entrust such missions to the Members of the United Nations that agree to conduct them in the framework of coalitions placed under the moral authority, but not the command, of our Organization. We would thus avoid giving mandates to United Nations soldiers without in turn giving them the legal, human and material means that are essential to the accomplishment of their missions.

This choice is all the more desirable since multifaceted conflicts continue to afflict many regions of the world, starting, unfortunately, with Africa, our own continent.

There significant progress has been made this year on the road to restoring peace in a certain number of countries, in particular in Liberia, which — thanks to the determination of the countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the support of the international community — has just emerged from seven years of fratricidal conflict. But we must recognize that in the case of other crises, the path towards peace remains uncertain.

This applies in particular to Sierra Leone, where the situation remains very disturbing in spite of the initiatives of the United Nations, of the OAU and most especially of ECOWAS to restore legitimacy in that country.

In the Congo (Brazzaville), another of our brother countries, the world witnessed a sudden deterioration of the political situation in the military confrontation that began on 5 June 1997. Here again it must be recalled that the combined efforts of the United Nations and the OAU and the lucid and commendable actions of President El Hadj Omar Bongo, President of the Gabonese Republic and also of the international mediation committee, have, unfortunately, not managed to find a political way out of this grave internal crisis, the prolongation of which is a serious threat to peace in the subregion and the continent.

Elsewhere on the continent, in Angola and in Somalia, internal conflicts continue to elude resolution.

Faced with all the dangers posed by all these conflicts, Africans have established the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa.

Nonetheless, it is clear that that pan-African organization does not alone possess the means to undertake the many and complex actions required by peacekeeping operations in Africa.

Massive support from the international community is therefore particularly needed in this area.

This is why I would like once again to commend the convening last 25 September, on the initiative of the President of the Security Council, of a special Council meeting at the ministerial level devoted to the preservation of peace, security and stability in Africa. We would also like to thank our colleague, Mrs. Madeleine Albright, Secretary of State of the United States.

That meeting gave eloquent witness to the special importance that the international community attaches to African problems.

However, I must emphasize that declarations of intent alone are not enough. We need concrete action. Hence, Senegal attaches great importance to the report that the Secretary-General is soon to submit to us and which is to contain specifically concrete recommendations on the causes of conflict in Africa, on the means of preventing them and, where need be, the means of resolving them in full agreement with our partners in the international community.

In this context, we welcome the increasing assistance we are beginning to receive from certain major countries of the northern hemisphere in the framework of the strengthening of Africa's capacity to maintain peace and react rapidly to crises. In this respect, we cannot but

mention France, the United States of America and Canada, as well as other countries of the North. Along those same lines, the inauguration in Copenhagen on 2 September by the Secretary-General of a planning centre for the new United Nations Stand-By Forces High-Readiness Brigade was an event of great importance for conflict prevention throughout the world.

Also in the framework of these concerns for Africa, I should like to mention the ongoing conflict between the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya on the one hand and the United States of America and the United Kingdom on the other with respect to the Lockerbie tragedy. We feel that the time is ripe for the parties concerned finally to successfully resolve this matter through dialogue and negotiation because — and this must be stressed once again — the people of Libya are suffering greatly from the embargo to which that country is being subjected.

We welcome the significant progress made in the framework of efforts to achieve a definitive peace in the Western Sahara under the auspices of the United Nations and under the guidance of Mr. James Baker, the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General.

The situation in the Middle East continues to be of concern to peace-loving people. Recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territories, the expansion of existing Israeli settlements or the construction of new ones, delays in negotiations — these all have had, to our great regret, a negative impact on the peace process. We would mention also the clear-cut acts of violence perpetrated against defenceless civilians, such as the recent attacks in Jerusalem. All of these acts must be condemned unreservedly because they do enormous damage to the peace efforts.

It is for all these reasons that we wish here to make a pressing appeal to the co-sponsors of the peace process and to the entire international community so that the most appropriate initiatives can be taken in order to salvage the peace process. For today, more than any other region of the world, the Middle East truly needs peace and security for its own development. This peace can be achieved only within a framework of mutual trust and the will to live together with respect for the rights and the dignity of all the peoples of the region.

Global security also requires arms reduction and the elimination of certain categories of weapons. That is why, for more than 50 years now, the United Nations has attempted to create a world free of all weapons of mass destruction. In the pursuit of this objective, significant progress has already been made. One year ago, we welcomed in this very Hall and with deep satisfaction the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

From that point on, the international community was involved in negotiations for a treaty for the elimination of anti-personnel landmines. Senegal, which is a member of the Conference on Disarmament, continues to attach special importance to this question, whose settlement would represent a major step forward towards a world that would offer greater security for all. In this context, we hope to see the Ottawa process, in which we are participants, succeed, by the end of this year, in the signing of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Eradicating poverty throughout the world has been and remains one of the fundamental objectives of the United Nations. By proclaiming in the Charter their determination to establish better standards of living in conditions of broader freedom, the founding fathers wanted to make of the United Nations an instrument that would fight for the social progress of all humankind.

But at the present time, planet Earth is threatened by global challenges that know no boundaries and that spare no peoples. The world's problems — poverty, exclusion, terrorism, organized crime and drug-trafficking — have become globalized far earlier than the economy has. That is why, regardless of the way in which we approach the future, the problems that exist at century's end cannot be resolved except through concerted and integrated action that can manage harmoniously all of the upheaval that is accompanying this changing period of history.

It is in this context that Senegal welcomes the successful conclusion of negotiations on the elaboration of an Agenda for Development. The consensus achieved in that Agenda, which draws its substance from earlier commitments in the various plans of action of recent international conferences, gives evidence of our shared faith in the virtues of a new global partnership for development based on the imperative of interdependence and on mutual benefit. Thus the conceptual framework has been set and accepted by all, and it remains for us to move towards action through a mobilization of resources commensurate with the generous intentions formulated in the Agenda for Development.

Along these lines, the settlement of the debt crisis, just remuneration for commodities, the lifting of trade barriers and an increase in official development assistance are indispensable prerequisites if we are to build a world that is more welcoming to everyone, so that our global village can be strengthened, in a spirit of solidarity, in a lasting way.

In this context, the fight against poverty is of clear priority, because it is unacceptable, in this era of space technology and the Internet, that millions of men and women the world over, and especially in the southern hemisphere, still do not have the minimal conditions for a decent life. They lack water, electricity, medicine, food — in a word, they lack security and well-being. The aspirations of peoples to a better life is an eternal quest that we cannot neglect, as it is true that human beings must remain at the very beginning and end of development.

In this quest for lasting solutions to the challenges of underdevelopment, my country took the initiative, at the thirty-third Summit of the OAU, held in Harare in June, to suggest two resolutions through which the Heads of State and Government of Africa unanimously renewed their support for the United Nations system in general and for the action taken by Africa in particular to raise the standard of living of African peoples. But this need for solidarity should not cause us to forget that any effort towards sustainable development is, above all, the national responsibility of States. It requires the definition and effective application of sound macroeconomic policies based on transparency, the rule of law, the practice of democracy, respect for human rights, social justice and the participation of all in the national development effort: in other words, it is based on what we today call good governance.

As my country sees it, this choice, which must be supplemented by solidarity at the global level, is the most certain course towards the shared ideal assigned to us by the Charter of the United Nations.

By enshrining in our Charter their attachment to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the founding fathers of the United Nations inspired millions of men and women to take what His Holiness Pope John Paul II called two years ago "the risk of freedom". Their commendable struggle means that today, respect for these rights and these freedoms is universally considered to be an essential component of any undertaking whose goal is the progress and well-being of the individual.

My country, Senegal, which attaches profound importance to the dignity and value of the human being, would like here to reiterate its commitment to continue to work alongside those many who are struggling to obtain or regain their right to freedom, justice and peace. This solidarity applies to our brothers and sisters in Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Libya, Afghanistan, Somalia, the Great Lakes region and elsewhere, who aspire only to peace in order to build their own future.

I would like, in this framework, to commend the appointment of Mrs. Mary Robinson to the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We assure her of our support and wish her every success in her noble mission.

The universal nature of the United Nations is a reality that must be consolidated and strengthened. In this context, we support without reservation the request of the Republic of China to join again the community of nations and be admitted to our Organization and its specialized agencies. Acceding to this request would be a significant contribution to the consolidation of the ideal of universality of the United Nations and do justice to the esteemed people of the Republic of China. Its economic and social development, commitment to democratic values and international behaviour have given irrefutable proof of its faith in the noble objectives of the United Nations Charter and of its capacity to assume the responsibilities of all Member States.

When the Berlin wall crumbled in 1989, great hope was aroused in the citizens of the world. Hope was born of rapid movement towards a new international order which would bring with it peace and justice as well as solidarity and progress. In this new international order, the Republic of China has a place, a place recognized by international law and the demands of a rapidly developing world.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the international community must do everything in its power to have hope triumph over the dangers menacing humankind. The human race's God-given intelligence provides the possibilities and resources to achieve this end. We have no choice but to help the United Nations adapt to the new world and play its proper role as a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of common ends. This is all the more essential since the great challenges to our future can only be met in a global framework of solidarity. The only solution — whether in the struggle against terrorism, drug-

trafficking and organized crime; in the protection of our environment and our collective health; or in the promotion of security through disarmament or the reduction of poverty — is a concerted and united global effort.

Together, we have already begun this effort, and my country urges the international community to continue it steadfastly. Senegal makes this appeal convinced that, with the intellectual and material resources available to humankind today, there is no challenge that cannot be met. All we need is the will.

We can do it. We must do it. Let us do it together, as brothers and sisters belonging to one family.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf.

Mr. Al-Sahaf (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. I am confident that your extensive experience and extreme competence will positively contribute to the successful conduct of the proceedings of this session. I would like to assure you that the Iraqi delegation will do its best to cooperate with you and with your colleagues in discharging your responsibilities to bring the proceedings of this session to a successful conclusion.

I would like also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Razali Ismail, for the incessant and sincere efforts which he made to crown the proceedings of the last session with success. He has earned our appreciation.

The success of the United Nations in the exercise of its desired role depends primarily on the proper application of the principles and provisions of the Charter, because it is the only instrument that can achieve the goals for which this Organization was established: the endeavour to achieve an international community based on respect for the sovereignty, freedom and independence of peoples and their empowerment to achieve their goals of economic and social development.

The reform of the United Nations structures and mechanisms in a proper way that ensures justice to all Member States and geographical groups will enable it to discharge its responsibilities in a manner consistent with the purposes, principles and provisions enshrined in the Charter.

We believe that the reform process of the Organization should not be restricted to the management aspect, important as it is. More important, there should be a common political will to redress the real and effective balance in the work of the Organization and to prevent its machinery from being used for private political objectives and purposes of certain super-Powers. Above all, one should pay attention to the dangers inherent in one international pole breaking loose and trying to dominate the world. In this context, Iraq welcomes the communiqué issued after the meeting of President Yeltsin of Russia and President Jiang Zemin of China in Moscow on 22 April 1997, which clearly called for the rejection of hegemony by any State over the world's destinies, of the exercise of power politics or of the monopoly of international issues. The Russian-Chinese communiqué also called for the establishment of a multi-polar international system. We in Iraq are proud to note that our leader, President Saddam Hussain, called 20 years ago for a multi-polar world.

The United Nations should not be controlled by the rich, who are a small minority in the world. Among the basic purposes of the United Nations, according to the Charter, is the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples. Based on that, we consider it necessary to avoid marginalizing developing countries and denying them the opportunities and potentialities for economic and scientific development.

While we are talking about the reform of the Organization and its mechanisms and the review of its role, we should not overlook the basic realities of the evolution of the international community from a small group of States that are homogeneous in their concepts and interests to a community of a global nature, necessarily heterogeneous and varying in all its perceptions and interests. This objective reality makes it imperative for all of us to employ our common energies to review the charters and mechanisms that we have inherited to make them consistent with the objective reality of the international community in order to achieve the common and public good, not simply the interests of the minority. One example that comes to mind in this regard is the area of human rights.

Finally, we must recognize the need for deliberation, consultation and extensive negotiation on what reform steps should be approved. A prerequisite for the success of any step in this common effort is the presence of a real consensus among States, not the voices

speaking under pressure and threats to their respective interests.

For more than seven years, Iraq has been suffering under an unjust blockade the like of which has never been witnessed in human history. We have more than once stated clearly and unequivocally before the General Assembly the steps that Iraq had undertaken to implement the resolutions of the Security Council on the so-called Gulf crisis, particularly resolution 687 (1991), so that the blockade imposed upon it could be lifted.

Iraq has carried out what was required of it under these resolutions. In the context of working with the Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for the implementation of section C of resolution 687 (1991), on proscribed weapons, Iraq has carried out all the substantive obligations set out therein. Iraq has never tarried in doing everything possible to emphasize its keenness to deal even with the very minute details so that the Security Council could move to carry out its corresponding obligations towards Iraq by lifting the blockade.

Our work in this regard is of special importance. We should pause to shed light upon it. The full implementation to date of the substantive obligations imposed on Iraq with regard to banned weapons is an established fact. Despite all the rumours, the truth is that Iraq no longer has any banned weapons, equipment, machinery or materials. The system of continuous observation established in Iraq by the Special Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency is working effectively and has been since August 1994, covering all the territory of Iraq.

When the new Chairman of the Special Commission, Ambassador Richard Butler, assumed his office, we welcomed his statements in which he affirmed that he would follow an objective, scientific and technical approach in dealing with what the Commission views as remaining issues, in accordance with the requirements clearly established by resolution 687 (1991). We affirmed our full readiness to cooperate with Ambassador Butler. We agreed with him, during his first visit to Baghdad last July, on an intensive common work programme, which we have actively carried out. In fact, substantial advances have been made in this common activity, and we look forward to the semi-annual report by the Special Commission, which we hope will be submitted to the Security Council in a few days. We hope it will equitably reflect the progress achieved and will open the door for the Security Council to start implementing paragraph 22 of resolution 687 (1991), which means the beginning of the lifting of the blockade on Iraq.

The comprehensive blockade imposed on Iraq is the most extensive and cruel boycott system ever imposed by the Security Council throughout its history. It covers and affects, in theory and in practice, every aspect of life. From our practical experience, we are convinced that the insistence on the perpetuation of the blockade against Iraq is not related to the fulfilment by Iraq of its obligations. It is rather a systematic plan to inflict severe damage on Iraq by putting an end to its development potential and by destroying its basic economic infrastructure to fulfil the selfish interests of an unjust super-Power.

The whole world has felt the magnitude of the wilful damage and destruction inflicted on Iraq by the continuation of the blockade, which is contrary to the purposes for which the United Nations was established, which purposes have been emphasized in its numerous conferences. International organizations, humanitarian missions and United Nations agencies have warned of the dangers besetting the people of Iraq as a result of the continued blockade, particularly the dangerous effects on women and children.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for instance, has confirmed in its latest study in March 1997 that 27.5 per cent of Iraqi children under five years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition and that the most threatened segment is children under two years old, due to malnutrition and the incidence of contagious diseases.

Furthermore, the environment in Iraq has suffered extensive damage because of indiscriminate bombing by the United States and some of its allies, which was aimed at power stations, sewage systems and factories, which we have not been able to rebuild fully because of the blockade.

Scientific studies and research carried out by foreign researchers and scientists have unequivocally confirmed that the United States used banned weapons and ammunition enriched with depleted uranium in its military operations against Iraq. This exposed vast tracts of Iraqi territory to contamination by deadly toxic materials. Numerous cases of hitherto unfamiliar illnesses have been recorded, such as congenital deformities of foetuses, bone deformities and many cases of leukaemia among children.

We heard many allegations from the representatives of the United States and Britain before Iraq agreed to deal with the oil-for-food formula. The representatives of both countries shed crocodile tears and alleged that they were concerned about the suffering of the Iraqi people. They said that they had come up with Security Council resolution 986 (1995) to alleviate this suffering. that resolution was not balanced. We and the United Nations Secretary-General, in May 1996, were able to reach a memorandum of understanding to implement the resolution in a balanced manner. When implementation started — that is to say, when the implementation of the memorandum started — in December 1996, the American and the British conduct was seen for what it really is.

The oil-for-food-and-medicine formula is a temporary and modest formula that meets only a small fraction of Iraq's needs. Nevertheless, this formula has encountered and continues to encounter many major obstacles and difficulties, which the United States and Britain in particular try to impose with a view to impeding the proper and effective implementation of the memorandum of understanding.

The conduct of the representatives of these two countries in the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 661 (1990) has led to an accumulation of contracts which were rejected or suspended on flimsy pretexts. This has caused a huge break in the smooth flow of the approval of such contracts and has thereby delayed the delivery and distribution of materials to the Iraqi people. To date, despite the fact that the implementation of the first period ended over three months ago, Iraq has received only 25 per cent of the medicine required and has not received any materials at all up to now relating to agriculture, education, water or sewage, or any spare parts for electricity-generating power stations.

Now more than ever is the time for the United Nations to discharge its responsibility with regard to its obligations under the Charter, not only to the people of Iraq, but to the international community. The United Nations has a duty to carry out a professional and objective review of the provisions of the blockade imposed on Iraq in order to implement paragraph 22 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) as a first step towards lifting the blockade completely.

All the discussions that have taken place in the United Nations, in specialized working groups and committees, and in particular in the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization, have stressed that sanctions should be an exceptional measure used by the United Nations in special circumstances and in accordance with the Charter. They have also stressed that such sanctions should not be based merely on political expediency, but rather should be firmly based on international law; that they should be implemented according to the principles of justice and international law; that they should not serve individual or factional interests; that in their implementation, consideration should be given to the human suffering that they cause; and that a time limit should be set for their lifting. Such a serious measure should not be imposed without setting a precise time for its lifting.

United Nations responsibility does not end there. The United Nations must put an end to all hostile practices against Iraq by the United States, which persists in its continuous attempts to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs with a view to causing instability and insecurity and in carrying out operations to change its nationalist regime; such practices are considered criminal acts even under its own domestic law. Statements made by senior American officials confirm the hostile American policy towards Iraq.

Members of the United Nations are not unaware of the article published in the *Washington Post* on 26 June 1997 or of the information contained in the ABC television programme aired on 26 June 1997. This information confirmed that the United States was involved in conspiracies against the nationalist regime in Iraq. This involvement is an official policy, approved by the American President, and more that $100 million has been appropriated for it. The Central Intelligence Agency has been charged with its implementation. Following that publicity, the policy was acknowledged by an official spokesman of the American State Department in a press briefing on 27 June.

The United Nations resolutions on Iraq affirm that all States have an obligation to respect Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. The United States is carrying out a policy of its own making, which runs counter to the provisions of the Charter and of the resolutions referred to. I hope that Members of the United Nations are not ignorant of the fact that among the means of achieving the declared objectives of this hostile policy towards Iraq is the imposition of no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq. This is an illegal act that is contrary to Security Council resolutions. It is a unilateral military act by the Governments of the United States and Britain — a clear application of brute power

politics against our country. We demand that the United Nations deplore and condemn unilateral policies based on the logic of brute force, opportunism, double standards and hegemony.

We are demanding no more than the legal and proper application of Security Council resolutions in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter. We believe that there is a collective duty to take joint action to evaluate in an equitable manner Iraq's fulfilment of its obligations. This responsibility rests first and foremost with the members of the Security Council because collectively they bear responsibility for any imbalance caused by the unilateral positions taken by the United States and Britain.

We are eager to establish excellent relations with neighbouring countries. We have affirmed on more than one occasion the importance of dialogue in order to arrive at the best solutions to problems affecting relations between the countries of the region. Unfortunately, we have not received the required response from certain parties, largely because of interference by external Powers that have nothing to do with the reality of the interests of the States of the region.

We note that, unfortunately, our neighbour, Turkey, is indulging in dangerous policies that run counter to the deep historical, religious and human relations between Iraq and Turkey. Turkey has repeatedly continued to violate our sovereignty, interfere in our internal affairs and invade our territory, on the basis of flimsy pretexts. We have discussed the situation with our neighbour, Turkey, on several occasions in the past. The most recent discussion was with the Under-Secretary of the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which took place on 15 September 1997 in Baghdad. During those discussions we explained that the solution to the Kurdish problem inside Turkey could not be achieved by committing armed aggression against Iraq, or by interfering in its internal affairs, in collaboration with foreign Powers — the United States and Britain — but rather by fully observing the principle of mutual respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the two countries and by cooperation between their Governments to ensure security and stability on both sides of the international border.

We have warned Turkey of the serious and negative consequences of its policies for relations between the two countries and for Turkey's own interests. Many countries in and outside the region, and international organizations, foremost among them the League of Arab States, have condemned the new Turkish aggression against Iraq, which began on 22 September 1997. We strongly condemn this new military aggression, which is a flagrant violation of Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We demand that Turkey immediately withdraw its invading forces from our country and refrain from repeating such aggressive military practices, which contradict good-neighbourly relations, the Charter and international law. We hold Turkey fully responsible internationally for its acts of aggression inside Iraq. We reserve our full right to respond to these acts and to assert our other legitimate rights under international law that arise as a result of Turkey's responsibility for those acts.

We are also keen on establishing good-neighbourly relations with Iran, based on mutual respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs. On 8 August 1997 President Saddam Hussain issued a call to the new Iranian Government to show its good intentions towards Iraq by carrying out its established obligations, foremost of which is the release of Iraqi prisoners of war and the return of the aircraft entrusted to it. He also affirmed that Iraq would reciprocate each step taken by Iran in this regard by taking two balanced steps: one corresponding to the Iranian step and another in line with our deep sense of humanitarian, regional and international responsibility to encourage the taking of successive, continual steps to ensure that regional security, mutual respect and balanced interests rest firmly on their proper foundation in such a way that benefits the peoples of the region.

It is unfortunate that our neighbour, Iran, does not match our inclination and prefers to continue to exploit the conditions of the unjust blockade imposed against Iraq and to exploit the imposition of no-fly zones by the United States and Britain in northern and southern Iraq to enable it to violate Iraqi sovereignty, penetrate its airspace and commit one military aggression after another. The most recent of such acts was the bombing by eight Iranian military aircraft of positions inside Iraqi territory, in the governorates of Diala and El-Kut on 29 September 1997.

Iran and another State are taking advantage of the illegal air embargo, imposed on northern and southern Iraq by the United States and its collaborators, to violate Iraq's sovereignty, penetrate its airspace and commit continuous military aggression on its territory. The continuation of this illegal air embargo constitutes an ongoing threat to Iraq's sovereignty and security, not only from America and Britain, but also from Iran and other States.

This situation, in which acts of aggression are repeatedly committed, means that the explicit United Nations pledges in relevant Security Council resolutions to safeguard Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity have become a mere dead letter. It is time that these pledges be honoured. If it does otherwise, the United Nations will have violated its own pledges.

Iraq is an ancient country with a history going back more than 7,000 years. The Iraqi people, who contributed immensely to human civilization, will remain in charge of their own affairs, independent in their choices and able to overcome these crises. As we stand at the threshold of the twenty-first century, we look forward to seeing the United Nations enabled to discharge its basic responsibilities to carry out the purposes embodied in the Charter.

The President: The next speaker on my list is the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Mozambique, His Excellency, Mr. Leonardo Santos Simão. I give him the floor.

Mr. Simão (Mozambique): On behalf of my Government and on my own behalf, allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. Your election to this office bears testimony to your commitment to the cause of international peace and security. I am sure that with your guidance and wide experience in international affairs, our work will record a successful outcome. You can rest assured of my delegation's full support during your term of office.

I would also like to put on record our appreciation of the manner in which your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, presided over the deliberations of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. His performance and innovative ideas will indeed help us tackle the challenges before our Organization in the years to come.

Let me pay a well-deserved tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his leadership and the commitment to the ideals of international peace and security demonstrated in his first year of office. I wish him well and pledge our full support and cooperation as he discharges his responsibilities in our Organization in times of change.

Within two days, Mozambique will celebrate five years of peace and stability. Looking back, albeit to see the challenges we have encountered, our nation has, without a doubt, made significant progress in its quest for the consolidation of peace and tranquillity, democracy and development, and we are determined further to pursue these goals.

In the political sphere, we have succeeded in creating an enabling environment in which political discussions are being carried out positively both in Parliament and by civil society at large. As we deepen this positive experience within the framework of a pluralistic society, there is broad consensus among all Mozambicans that dialogue must continue to be the way to overcome differences and to address the development needs of our country. To this end, my Government will spare no effort in order to ensure that Parliament continues to function normally, for we believe that this course of action remains a key factor for the consolidation of peace, democracy and national reconciliation. The next step will be to hold the country's first municipal elections, which will complement the process initiated in 1994 with the holding of multi-party general elections.

The implementation of the structural adjustment programme initiated in 1987 has indeed created an attractive environment for private investment, both domestic and foreign, which is gradually and steadily leading the country to economic and social progress. It is within this multidisciplinary and global action that economic reforms are taking place, with results that are already positive and tangible. Preliminary indications of the performance of the economy during the first half of 1997 estimate that growth in gross domestic product will reach about 7 per cent by the end of this year, a figure which is higher than that originally forecast.

In speaking on this very important subject I would like to underscore the high importance we attach to the need for flexibility with respect to the implementation of initiatives for debt relief and sustainability. My Government is encouraged by recent indications from international financial institutions concerning the impending decision on the eligibility of Mozambique to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. I would hope that once such a decision is made the time-frame between the decision point and the completion point might be as short as possible so as to have the desired impact on the economy. Without far-reaching debt relief measures, it will be virtually impossible for the country to sustain the current growth and stabilization of the economy. We hope that as soon as possible all least developed countries may accede to the Initiative.

In this regard, my Government welcomes the recent admission of Russia to both the Group of 8 and the Paris Club. It is our hope that those steps will enable that country to play a more active and constructive role in matters related to debt forgiveness and relief, particularly in relation to countries like Mozambique. For our part, we will continue to undertake and deepen further our political and economic reforms, as we have over the past 10 years, with particular emphasis on the provision of basic health care and education.

The rehabilitation of the economic and social fabrics, especially in the rural areas, is seriously hampered by the scourge of landmines. These horrible weapons have killed and continue to kill and wound hundreds of innocent citizens. With that in mind, at the fourth International Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations on Landmines, which met at Maputo in February of this year, my Government approved a resolution that prohibits, with immediate effect, the production, commercialization, utilization and non-authorized transportation of anti-personnel landmines in the territory of Mozambique.

My Government has been participating fully in the negotiations within the framework of the Ottawa process. In this respect, we welcome the results achieved at the recently concluded Oslo Diplomatic Conference. We urge all countries to heed the call of the peoples of the world and to join the majority of nations in signing the international treaty on the total ban of anti-personnel landmines in December this year. We wish to launch a vigorous appeal to the international community to ensure that all the provisions of that treaty with respect to, *inter alia*, the destruction of stockpiled anti-personnel mines and those laid within minefields and in areas outside minefields, and with respect to international cooperation and assistance, are fully implemented.

In this respect, I wish to highlight the importance my Government attaches to the question of assistance to victims of landmines before, during and following mine clearance, in order to ensure the early and safe return and resettlement of displaced persons with a view to ensuring a speedy resumption of economic activity, in particular in rural areas.

I would like to express our deep gratitude to those countries and organizations that are providing generous assistance in demining activities, and invite others to join us in implementing our national demining programme.

In August this year, the Government and civil society jointly launched a national campaign for the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which will take place on 10 December 1998. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with which my country fully associates itself, represents the commitment by all peoples of the world to their faith in human dignity. The nationwide celebrations, encompassing a variety of activities, will afford a unique opportunity to all Mozambicans — and, indeed, to other peoples elsewhere — to review and educate themselves on such an important issue for mankind. It will be an opportunity to underscore the importance of the non-selectivity, indivisibility and universality of human rights.

Within that framework, my Government follows with keen attention the progress being made in the Preparatory Committee on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court. The establishment of such a court, with the purpose of bringing to justice individuals accused of committing the most heinous crimes, is an important contribution to the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The court must be entrusted with clear powers in order fully to discharge its mandate. In particular, its competence and jurisdiction should be clearly defined in conformity with its objectives and taking into account the principle of complementarity.

In the African continent, we are participating in discussions for the establishment of an African court of human and peoples' rights. It is our hope that the high-level meeting scheduled for next year at Addis Ababa will succeed in finding the needed consensus on all outstanding issues pertaining to the court.

In the past 12 months, the issue of United Nations reforms has gained new impetus with new developments which have taken place quite recently. It is a fact that there is a broad consensus with regard to the need for such reforms. Nevertheless, in carrying them out it will be important to find ways and means that will ensure that the legitimate rights and aspirations of all Member States, and in particular the developing countries, are safeguarded. This is particularly relevant with respect to the proposals for the enlargement of the Security Council.

Similarly, my Government has taken due note of and welcomes the reform package presented by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform". The report,

the most comprehensive and far-reaching ever produced in the annals of the Organization, addresses vital elements that require in-depth discussion by Member States.

As a country striving to strengthen peace and security both within its borders and in the regional context, as well as in the world as a whole, Mozambique regards preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and post-conflict peace-building as important elements that must be strengthened in the new international context. In this connection, we are participating with other countries of the region in joint efforts aimed at reinforcing our preparedness for emergencies. We therefore encourage and support the Secretary-General in his endeavours to enable the United Nations to deploy peacekeeping operations rapidly.

In the field of human rights, I welcome the proposed consolidation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights into a single new Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. I commend the Secretary-General for this course of action, which is in line with the sentiments expressed by Member States not only in the General Assembly but also within the framework of the Commission on Human Rights. The merging of the two bodies will in fact eliminate the duplication of tasks and expenditures and streamline the work of the new, consolidated body.

On behalf of my Government, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate Mrs. Mary Robinson on her assumption of the post of High Commissioner for Human Rights. We pledge to her our full support, both within the context of the Commission on Human Rights, of which Mozambique is a member, and also within the context of promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide.

With respect to financing our Organization, I fully agree with the Secretary-General that the current financial crisis facing us

> "is directly linked to the failure of ... Member States to discharge their ... obligations regarding prompt and full payment of assessed ... contributions". [A/51/950, para. 82]

We would really hope that the very same countries that so far have failed to fulfil their treaty obligations, will this time not only pay their dues but also assist the Secretary-General by contributing to the proposed Revolving Credit Fund.

I equally commend the proposed establishment of a development account resulting from reductions in non-programme costs over the next few years. We regard the establishment of such an account as an important contribution in addressing the economic and social needs of developing countries on a more consistent and predictable basis.

We also endorse the proposed establishment of the post of Deputy Secretary-General within the framework of strengthening the leadership capacity of the Secretariat.

The creation of a Strategic Planing Unit, in our view, will further enhance the ability of the Secretary-General to act in accordance with the provisions of the Article 99 of the Charter. In the light of the new realities, it is our firm belief that the information gathered by this Unit will be brought to the attention not only of that body but also of the General Assembly, in accordance with the provisions of Articles 10 and 11 of the Charter.

As for the proposed establishment of the "UN House" under a single United Nations flag, it is important to ensure that the identity and the vast individual and unique experience — as well as the expertise — accumulated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are preserved. More significantly, the need for decentralization and flexibility in decision-making at the country level should be safeguarded and further enhanced so as to ensure that everyone benefits from the proposed consolidation. It is my Government's hope that the new arrangement will result in a united, cooperative and coherent framework at the country level. The experience of coordination of all of the United Nations programmes and funds in Mozambique is positive and encouraging.

We have taken due note of the proposal for the establishment of a ministerial-level commission to examine possible changes in the Charter with a view to preparing our Organization for the challenges of the next century. Given the complexity of the issues to be looked at, the commission should be established on the basis of geographic representation, after adequate consultations, and should be provided with clear and precise terms of

reference in order to guarantee that its views are universal and as consensual as possible.

It is our hope that the proposed reforms — those being implemented within the purview of the Secretary-General, as well as the ones under discussion in the Working Group — will result in greater focus of the United Nations in the economic and social spheres. Now that we have gathered consensus on an Agenda for Development, we need to ensure that appropriate steps are taken by a reformed, more efficient United Nations to realize our goals.

The trends towards the establishment of regional and continental blocs require deep cooperation and integrated economies. Only combined unity of purpose and action can lend greater leverage and capacity to negotiate and make economies competitive for investment. This must be complemented by political stability and an enabling environment for domestic and foreign investment. We in southern Africa are joining our efforts towards this goal within the framework of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

These efforts will be further enhanced to a great extent by the recently established Indian Ocean Rim-Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC). The new organization assembles a variety of countries from Asia and Africa, plus Australia. Its fundamental principles include the facilitation and promotion of economic cooperation, bringing together representatives of government, business and academia.

My Government follows with renewed interest the efforts towards the mitigation of conflicts throughout the world. We are conscious of the fact that economic and social development are possible only when we live in peace and political stability. Therefore, prevention, management and conflict resolution constitute a fundamental issue in our foreign policy.

In this regard, I wish to associate myself with previous speakers in congratulating most sincerely the establishment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo following decades of uncertainty. We hope that the new authorities will play a positive role in our collective efforts for regional peace and stability, particularly in the Great Lakes region. The challenges facing the new Government are indeed immense and deserve assistance and support from the international community.

Likewise, we commend the successful outcome of the electoral process in Liberia, which symbolizes the completion of the peace process in that country. We look forward to the reinvigoration of a united, peaceful and prosperous country which is ready to contribute to the effort towards the economic stabilization of the entire region. It is our hope that the international community will spare no efforts in assisting Liberia to overcome the tragedy that has fallen on it for so many years.

Mr. Jele (South Africa), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) deserves our special commendation for the role it has played in the resolution of the Liberian crisis and for its current efforts in the restoration of peace and respect for the rule of law in Sierra Leone.

We equally note with satisfaction the recent progress made for the settlement of the issue of Western Sahara, and we encourage the parties concerned to continue down this positive path.

The peace process in Angola continues to face serious challenges as a result of the failure of UNITA to comply fully with the agreed commitments under the Lusaka Protocol. With the recent adoption of Security Council resolution 1130 (1997), it is now for this body to ensure that the provisions of all other relevant resolutions are fully complied with in order to bring the peace process back on track and to avoid the continued delays we have been witnessing over the three years of the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol.

On the other hand, my Government remains concerned about the situation in the Congo. We support the initiative of the heads of State and Government of the region under the leadership of His Excellency President Bongo, and we call upon the parties to exercise maximum restraint in order not to jeopardize any further those efforts. All parties concerned must set aside their differences and work together for the attainment of a negotiated settlement to prevent further suffering of innocent civilians and destruction of property.

Recent events in the Comoros islands underline the need for full respect of the independence and territorial integrity of all States, under any circumstances. We encourage permanent dialogue among all concerned parties so as to find a negotiated settlement of the dispute

within the framework of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) peace initiatives.

On behalf of my Government, I would like to express our solidarity to the people of East Timor. We do hope that the ongoing negotiations between Portugal and Indonesia under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and other initiatives, will finally lead to a successful outcome of this issue in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter.

On the Middle East, my Government notes with concern the deterioration of the security situation in that area, which poses great danger to the efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution in the region. Peace cannot be achieved at the expense of other peoples' interests. The policy of establishing new settlements in the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories should be discontinued. As we have said before, the existence of both Israel and Palestine is an undeniable reality which nobody should ignore if we are to reach a final settlement of this long-standing conflict. Dialogue and compliance with security Council and General Assembly resolutions are the instruments through which a solution should be found in the Middle East.

We are also following with interest the developments concerning the conflict situations in the Persian Gulf region. In the highest interests of its peoples, we urge all the parties concerned to act together with a view to finding an internationally acceptable solution to all outstanding issues, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter.

At the dawn of the new millennium, we bear the responsibility of preparing the United Nations to save not only succeeding generations from the scourge of war but also to provide an Organization that will effectively and efficiently promote cooperation and development. We in Mozambique are prepared to work towards this goal.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Chad, His Excellency Mr. Mahamat Saleh Annadif.

Mr. Annadif (Chad) (*interpretation from French*): In taking the floor for the first time before this Assembly, I feel legitimately proud to be the voice with which the people of Chad, its Government and its President, His Excellency Mr. Idriss Déby, convey a message of peace, hope and wishes for complete success in our work.

I would like to join the eminent speakers who have preceded me in reiterating my delegation's warm congratulations to the President on his illustrious election to preside over this session. That choice is both a tribute to his country, Ukraine — a country resolutely focused on the quest for global peace — and the culmination of his long career as a talented diplomat. He can be assured of the complete support of my country, Chad, in the discharge of his duties.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who has conducted the work of the fifty-first session with tact, competence and devotion.

Lastly, I would like to greet our Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, a son of Africa who has succeeded another great African, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The election of Mr. Kofi Annan is the culmination of a brilliant career devoted to the service of the international community. It is an honour to his country, Ghana, and to all Africa. I should like to assure him of the firm support of the Republic of Chad in his efforts to bring about the necessary and indispensable reforms of our Organization so as to make it more capable of achieving the purposes and principles of the Charter in our rapidly changing world.

The ideals of peace, liberty and development, which are pursued tirelessly by each and every nation represented here, are of special significance for my country and people. Indeed, drawing upon the lessons of its sad experiences, since 1 December 1990 Chad has made a firm commitment to the establishment of a state of law and the tireless quest for peace and national unity which are the essential foundations for its economic and social development.

At previous sessions the delegation of Chad regularly referred to positive developments in our country. Today I have the honour and privilege of announcing that with the presidential election of 1996 and the legislative elections held at the beginning of this year, most of our republican and democratic institutions are in place. Projects are under way to hold local elections. All this is taking place in a climate of peace and national harmony. The ongoing quest for peace between Chadians, the necessary consolidation of the achievements of national unity and the willingness to involve everyone in public administration have compelled our President, Mr. Idriss Déby, to practise what we call consensual, participatory democracy. It follows that all

political parties, including those of the opposition, are represented in all State structures. By the same token, a national mediator has recently been appointed.

The fifty-second session of the General Assembly coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is the proper place to reaffirm our loyalty to that instrument, which, despite its imperfections, is, in its own language,

> "a common standard of achievement". *(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, resolution 217 (III), part A, operative paragraph)*

In Chad we are getting down to work, and significant progress has been registered. Thus, our independent press is one of the freest in Africa; human rights organizations are proliferating and carry out their activities unhindered; and organized civil society is fully playing its role.

Despite these noteworthy advances, insidious campaigns have been sporadically unleashed against my country. For my Government the subject of human rights is not taboo. Thus, I should like once again to reiterate the invitation that Mr. Idriss Déby, President of the Republic, extended during his last visit to France to all countries and human rights organizations that are truly interested in the fate of the people of Chad: to come to Chad and freely look into the situation.

With the return to social peace and political stability, my country is turning a new page in its history, one that should enable it to face the challenges of the twenty-first century. To do that, the Government of Chad has adopted a number of principles that, backed up by concrete actions, should make it possible to achieve vigorous and sustained economic growth. The objectives are the following: the continuation and consolidation of the process of democratizing political and social life; the increased participation of the citizens in political, economic and social life and in making decisions that concern them; the establishment of sound rules of government; the promotion of the private sector; the development of human resources; and the restoration and safeguarding of environmental equilibrium and of the ecosystem, with special attention being paid to environmental problems related to human activities.

This entire development strategy will be presented and discussed at the round table on Chad to be held in Geneva in the months ahead. That meeting is necessary to reactivate and adapt the plan of orientation covering the period 1990-2000.

I take this opportunity to invite all countries and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to take part in that important conference on the future of Chad.

I should now like to touch on a problem that is of crucial importance for my Government: the environment. Chad is a Sahelian country, afflicted, moreover, by drought and desertification. It is deeply concerned with protecting the environment, our common heritage, whose exploitation for us is a necessary condition for success in the struggle against poverty. This is the appropriate forum in which to express our hope that the results achieved by the Conference of States Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification will meet our expectations.

The prospect of the exploitation of Chad's oil resources has led to a systematic disinformation campaign alleging environmental degradation in the region concerned. I should like solemnly to state here that all necessary measures have been taken by the Government not only to preserve environmental balance but also to prevent any risk of accident that could jeopardize it.

Another subject of grave concern indirectly connected with the environment is that of mines, an estimated 1 million of which infest a large portion of the national territory, thus precluding any development activities in that region. We would reiterate in this respect the appeal for assistance in mine clearance that was made from this rostrum by President Idriss Déby during the commemorative meeting on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. My Government, a victim of the scourge of mines, welcomes the adoption on 18 September last of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

The international situation remains alarming, even if peace ad security are not gravely threatened at the global scale. In Africa, despite the hopes born of the democratization of the political life of many countries, hotbeds of tension still persist. In Angola, implementation of the settlement plan advocated by the international community is running aground on obstacles that jeopardize a final return to peace in this country. We call

again on all parties, particularly UNITA, fully to implement the Lusaka Protocol.

Periodic clashes remind us that in Somalia, the hatchet has not definitely been buried, despite numerous attempts at reconciling the fraternal Somali people.

The Great Lakes region is progressively entering a phase of relative calm despite sporadic incidents stemming from the chain of events that have caused upheaval in this part of the continent. We welcome the concerted efforts of the international community and of the countries of the subregion to help restore a definitive peace.

In Sierra Leone, the situation resulting from the coup is far from responding to the wishes of the people. Chad, for its part, strongly supports the consultations held within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States, and in particular the conclusions of its last Summit, held in Abuja, Nigeria.

In Central Africa, closer to Chad, the exacerbation of the conflict in the sister Republic of the Congo, despite the appeal made at Libreville by eight Heads of State on 15 September last, is of great concern to us. My country is of the view that only an immediate and unconditional cease-fire can make it possible to re-establish dialogue between the two parties. This in turn would make possible a greater involvement of the international community, particularly for the deployment of a multinational force under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

The scope of the tragedy of these upheavals on the African continent can be gauged by the number of homeless and of refugees who, left to their own devices, are wandering from country to country, seeking a land to receive them where they can live in peace. It is urgent for the international community to take greater notice of these tragedies, which concern us all, in order to find appropriate solutions.

This sombre picture of the situation on the continent does not eclipse the successes of international and, above all, African mediation in crisis and conflict situations, such as in the Central African Republic and in Liberia. In the Central African Republic, the painstaking settlement of the political and military crisis to the satisfaction of the political class is, for Chad — a neighbouring, brotherly country — cause for satisfaction. Likewise, we welcome the return to peace in Liberia, which has made it possible to designate a President of the Republic and a Parliament by means of free and democratic elections.

In both cases, the contribution of Africa was decisive. We are proud of this, just as we commend the Security Council for its support of various African initiatives. This compels me to urge the acceleration of the process leading to the establishment of an inter-African peacekeeping force. We also urge the strengthening of existing structures, such as the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa; the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa at Lomé, in Togo; and the OAU's Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.

With respect to Western Sahara, Chad welcomes the fresh impetus given the process by both parties and hopes that the settlement plan will shortly be implemented in full.

In the Middle East, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process seems to be put to the test, given recent developments in this region. We urge all parties concerned to respect the Washington agreements. This is the only alternative if we are to achieve definitive peace in this region. Neither violence nor extremism, nor, certainly, intransigence will allow us to arrive at a just and definitive solution to this crisis, which has gone on far too long.

In Asia, the situation in Afghanistan and in Cambodia can be solved only by political means. Therefore we urge the protagonists to gather around the negotiating table and seek to resolve their differences.

Chad welcomes the progress, however slow, that has been registered in recent years in disarmament. We denounce, however, the shocking trade in conventional weapons, which foment so many conflicts that ravage various parts of the world, including my country. We therefore support the efforts initiated in western Africa related to the moratorium on the export, import and production of small arms.

My country reaffirms its unswerving faith in the virtues of dialogue as a means of resolving conflicts between States. I should like in this connection to refer to the question of the embargo that has so harshly and for so many years afflicted the neighbouring and brotherly country of Libya. Chad is in a good position to gauge the consequences that affect not only the people of Libya but also the people of Chad, as that country's neighbour.

That is why, as a country that is dually cut off and deprived of its principal means of evacuation and supply, Chad firmly supports the resolutions of the OAU, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement, and calls for the lifting of this unjust embargo. We should like to take this opportunity to express our solidarity with the people of Iraq and Cuba, who have been indiscriminately affected by similar measures.

My country has noted with satisfaction the end of the bipolar world, which has made possible the advent of a new type of constructive dialogue that will enable us together to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. In resuming diplomatic relations with the Republic of China, the Government and people of Chad have no intention other than to diversify their relations of friendship and cooperation with all peace- and justice-loving countries of the world on the basis of equality and solidarity. In the name of the principle of universality so dear to our Organization, we support the return of the Republic of China to the concert of nations.

While the conflicts and other tensions throughout the world concern us, so too does the international economic situation. The justifiable fear expressed by the developing countries in the aftermath of the cold war has not been mitigated. The recent report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development reminds us of this. Poverty in the developing countries and the impoverishment of important social strata in the developed countries provide fertile ground for intolerance, extremism and nationalism, whose consequences we are all too familiar with. Despite the numerous dense documents adopted at major conferences, the expected concrete action has run aground on the selfish conduct of the richest. Such an attitude imposes limits upon the globalization of the economy.

Africa, which has benefited from the sustained attention of the international community during this decade, is still, unfortunately, a continent ravaged by poverty, malnutrition and epidemics of all kinds on a large scale.

To the perpetual problems of indebtedness and the deterioration of the terms of trade are added the constant marginalization of our continent from the international economic circles. It is therefore urgent for concrete measures to be taken so that Africa can experience sustained growth, which should lead to genuine development. The terms of the declaration of the Heads of State and Government of the seven most industrialized countries and Russia in Denver last May should be made a reality in this respect so that Africa, whose well-known vast natural resources can really become part of the world economy.

The new Chad reiterates its unswerving support of United Nations action in the sphere of peacekeeping and in the area of development activities.

Over time, the reform of our institution has become an imperative. Therefore, in the context of globalization and interdependence, the United Nations must adapt itself and become both the instrument and the expression of multilateralism in which the interests of all are taken into account and safeguarded. For our part, we consider that the promotion of development must be at the core of our renewed Organization.

The United Nations deserves more confidence than ever before, provided that it derives from incontrovertible legitimacy which the Security Council with its present composition is far from embodying. It has now been established that that irreplaceable body should be adapted, but its necessary restructuring should not have a detrimental effect on any part of the world.

An acknowledgement of the legitimate claims of the various groups that make up our Organization is therefore indispensable. Chad, for its part, reaffirms the position stated at the last Summit of Heads of State or Government of the Organization of African Unity to assure the equitable representation of the African continent in that body, in which the destiny of peoples is at stake. This is a requirement if the renewed Security Council is to be credible and effective in the service of humanity and if it is not to be a Council of double standards.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, His Excellency Mr. Choe Su Hon.

Mr. Choe Su Hon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) *(spoke in Korean; English text furnished by the delegation)*: Allow me first of all, on behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, to congratulate Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko, the Minister For Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. We believe that his rich experience and diplomatic skill in dealing with international affairs will lead this session to fruitful results.

I also express my gratitude to the former President, Mr. Razali Ismail, Malaysian Ambassador to the United Nations, for his great contributions to the successful conclusion of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. At the same time, I take this opportunity to express appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his efforts devoted to the activities of the United Nations.

The fifty-second session of the General Assembly is now being held just two years before we enter a new century. The twenty-first century should be different from the present century, characterized by a history of hot and cold wars. It is the desire of humankind and the common task of the international community to make the forthcoming century peaceful and prosperous.

Though we are at the end of the twentieth century, we are still facing complex and intricate challenges. A tendency towards domination continues to prevail in international relations even after the abolition of colonialism. Today the United Nations, which once contributed to eradicating colonialism, has been placed in danger of being converted into a tool that would allow high-handedness and arbitrariness.

Though the cold war has ended, the nuclear stockpiles remain as enormous as ever before, and the thinking of the cold-war era dominates international relations. Today such challenges are clearest in North-East Asia and, more precisely, in the Korean peninsula. In the Korean peninsula, national division, the legacy of the cold war era, continues, the power and confrontation politics of the cold war era persist and relations between the North and South of Korea are ever worsening. The aggressive military alliances, vestiges of the cold war, are being rearranged, and provocative joint military exercises are being conducted against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with annually increased military expenditures amid the tense situation in the Korean peninsula. In addition to the military pressures, which have continued since the cold war era, issues such as human rights, terrorism, economic sanctions, food aid and so on are also being abused as tools for high-handedness and interference in our internal affairs. All these attempts are aimed at stifling our socialist system.

Like all other United Nations Member States, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a sovereign State with the right to choose its own political system, and it deserves respect for this. Our style of socialism is the one our people have chosen by themselves, and it is not a system doomed to collapse even though others may attempt to bring this about. The single-hearted unity between the leader, the party and the masses is the source of the invincibility of our system.

On 8 July this year, which marked the third year of the demise of the great leader President Kim Il Sung, all our people became mourners and observed the memorial service. Simultaneously with the end of the mourning period, we instituted a *Juche* calendar with the year 1912 as the base year, and designated 15 April as the Day of Sun in memory of the birthday of the great leader President Kim Il Sung. This affords a good illustration of the unanimous will of our people who are determined to hand down, forever, the revolutionary life and the immortal exploits of the fatherly leader who created the *Juche* idea and built socialism centred on the popular masses. Today is 2 October, Juche 86 in our country, according to our *Juche* Calendar.

For our Korean people, the last three years have been a period of severe trials during which our people suffered the greatest loss of the nation, confronted the persistent manoeuvres of the hostile forces to stifle our socialist system and suffered from a series of natural calamities.

Nevertheless, our people have been always optimistic and able to continue their victorious advancement by overcoming all sorts of challenges, because they hold in high esteem another great leader, General Kim Jong Il, an iron-willed and brilliant commander.

Currently, the nomination process is under way in my country to elect the great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il as the General Secretary of the Korean Workers' Party, and all our people are full of boundless joy and emotion over their long-cherished desire being realized.

This clearly demonstrates the firm will and conviction of our people to carry through the *Juche* cause, holding in high esteem forever the great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il as the head of our Party and our revolution.

This is the reality of socialist Korea, where the people enjoy the blessing of the leadership and the leader enjoys the blessing of the people through the generations.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our deep thanks to the Governments, organizations and individuals of various countries, and to the governmental and non-

governmental international organizations, including the United Nations, for their deep sympathy and condolences, as well as for the humanitarian assistance extended to our people who suffered the deepest sorrow and natural calamities.

Korea's reunification question is, in essence, a question of regaining national sovereignty throughout the country, which is being trampled by foreign forces and of abolishing the legacy of the cold war era.

The Government of our Republic regards as its Three Charters for National Reunification the three principles of independence, peaceful reunification and great national unity, the 10-Point Programme of the Great Unity of the Whole Nation and the proposal for the founding of the Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo.

The great leader General Kim Jong Il, in his programmatic work published on 4 August of this year, made clear our firm will and determination to clearly reunify the country, holding aloft the Three Charters of National Reunification set forth by the fatherly leader. The three principles of national reunification constitute the great common reunification programme for the Korean nation, which was confirmed by the north and south through their 4 July Joint Statement and was supported by the twenty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly as well.

The 10-Point Programme of the Great Unity of the Whole Nation for National Reunification is a political programme aimed at attaining the unity of the whole nation to strengthen the driving force of national reunification. This programme indicates comprehensively the objective and ideological basis, as well as the principles and methods, for achieving the great national unity.

The proposed Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo is the blueprint which gives the full picture of a reunified State and the ways for its realization as well.

More than half a century has passed since the north and south of Korea have existed with different systems. Under such circumstances, the establishment of a unified national State through the confederation formula — based on one nation and one State, two systems and two Governments — becomes the most reasonable way of efficiently resolving the issues pertaining to national reunification.

The emergence of a unified national State — independent, peaceful and neutral — in the Korean peninsula will make a great contribution to lasting peace and stability in North-East Asia, where the great Powers are contiguous to each other.

No matter how the situation and circumstances may change in the future, our people will remain unshakeable in their will, and the Government of our Republic will adhere to its consistent reunification policy in reunifying the country, on the basis of the Three Charters for National Reunification.

Improved relations between the north and south of Korea are an urgent requirement for achieving the independent and peaceful reunification of the country. If the south Korean authorities give up their anti-national and anti-reunification confrontation policies and make a positive change in practice, we will meet them at any time to have open-minded negotiations on the destiny of the nation and make joint efforts for the country's reunification.

For a correct solution to the Korean question, the countries concerned must also play positive roles with a sincere attitude about helping Korea's reunification. The United States, a State party which is directly responsible for the Korean question, should make a radical change in its anachronistic policy towards Korea and refrain from laying obstacles in the way of the independent and peaceful reunification of Korea. Japan, which imposed immeasurable misfortune and disaster upon the Korean people in the past, must sincerely reflect upon its past, discontinue its hostile policy towards our Republic and stop provoking Korea's division and hindering its reunification.

It is the consistent stand of the Government of our Republic to prevent war and to ensure a lasting peace in the Korean peninsula. This becomes our primary task in the efforts to reunify the country peacefully, without recourse to the armed forces. In order to ensure peace in the Korean peninsula, it is imperative to oppose aggression and war manoeuvres and to remove the danger of war.

The prevailing situation in the Korean peninsula is so tense that a war could break out at any moment, due to the attempts of the United States, Japan and South Korean authorities against our socialist Republic. In recent years alone, the United States introduced over $3 billion worth of war equipment into South Korea. At the

same time, it has been conducting joint military exercises more frequently than ever before, and even directing the guns of the United States forces in Japan and the Pacific fleet towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Of late, Japan is also accelerating its political, legal and diplomatic moves with a view to legalizing its engagement of the self-defence force in a possible Korean war under the signboard of the "revision" of the "Guidelines for United States-Japan Military Cooperation".

In addition, the South Korean authorities increased their military budget up to $17 billion for this year and again decided to increase next year's military budget up to $19 billion, while bolstering military "cooperation" with foreign forces against their fellow countrymen.

Such moves, reflecting the policies of the cold-war era, inevitably provoke self-defensive counter-measures from our Republic, thus maintaining the present tense situation in a vicious cycle of aggravation.

This situation of the Korean peninsula urgently requires the establishment of a new peace arrangement. In order to ease tension and avert the danger of a war in the Korean peninsula, the United States should, before anything else, abandon its hostile policy against our Republic and sign a peace agreement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States are still in a state of temporary ceasefire. The United States is in direct confrontation with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, maintaining tens of thousands of its troops in and around South Korea.

Removing the danger of war and ensuring peace in the Korean peninsula presupposes the withdrawal of the United States troops and the conclusion of a peace agreement between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. Hence, the resolution of the major issues pertaining to the maintenance of peace and security in the Korean peninsula falls under the responsibilities of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. We recognize that these issues should be the top priority on the agenda to be considered at the proposed four-party talks if the talks are to be held to discuss the issues of ensuring peace and security in the Korean peninsula.

If the United States is sincerely interested in ensuring peace in the Korean peninsula, it should, *inter alia*, show its credibility by taking practical steps to discontinue military threats and lift economic sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The countries concerned should refrain from any acts that would be likely to impede the withdrawal of the United States troops from South Korea and the conclusion of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States peace agreement.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will continue, as in the past, to make every effort to ensure peace in the Korean peninsula and to bring about the peaceful reunification of the country, thus contributing towards peace and security in North-East Asia and the rest of the world.

In order to prepare itself for the demands of the next century, the United Nations should make an early departure from outdated structures that serve the interests of only a few countries, allowing them privileges and high-handedness. First of all, international society should be democratized through the democratic reform of the United Nations. The United Nations should be restructured so as to reflect the will of developing countries, which make up the majority of United Nations Members, and to enable them to exercise their sovereignty on an equal footing.

The General Assembly, in which all United Nations Member States are equally represented, has been democratized, compared to the Security Council. Yet its authority has been severely restricted. On the other hand, the Security Council lacks democracy to a great extent, although it enjoys powerful authority. The present composition of the permanent membership of the Security Council does not fully represent the developing countries, which form the overwhelming majority of Member States. Neither does the non-permanent membership reflect geographical representation.

The end of the cold war has provided possibilities for channelling more resources into the field of development cooperation, but the present structure of the United Nations system does not correspond to this situation.

At this session of the General Assembly the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will exert constructive efforts to resolve such problems and seek active cooperation with other Member States, including the non-aligned countries.

Despite the end of the cold war, the arms build-up continues unabated in different parts of the world. The United Nations has long called for comprehensive and complete disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament. However, some nuclear and military Powers are still boosting their efforts aimed at the qualitative modernization of military strength under cover of calls for selective disarmament. As a result, in most cases disarmament is now being replaced by the process of replacing with more sophisticated weapons those that have become obsolete as a result of technical developments.

Today, after the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the nuclear Powers are resorting to subcritical nuclear tests to further modernize their nuclear arsenals.

International society, and the non-nuclear-weapon States in particular, should give due attention to taking measures to overcome this phenomenon. It is in this context that we support the proposal to convene the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

In recent years there have been ample discussions on human rights at the United Nations and in other international forums. However, the desired results have not yet been achieved. This is mainly attributable to the fact that United Nations Member States are pursuing different ends in their deliberations on human rights and have conflicting views with regard to standards for human rights.

As long as human rights issues continue to be abused as a political means to put pressure on and interfere in the internal affairs of others, any deliberations on human rights will only have adverse effects upon international relations, as is the case today. Furthermore, the application of double standards has not ceased with regard to other crucial issues such as disarmament and terrorism.

In order to eliminate high-handedness and arbitrariness, and also to ensure fairness and justice in resolving international issues, international society should be democratized at the earliest possible date.

The twenty-first century should be a century devoted to development and cooperation. Development is directly linked to international peace and security.

In recent years major conferences, such as World Summit for Social Development, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and the World Food Summit, were convened under the auspices of the United Nations. These conferences made significant contributions to elaborating action programmes and providing guidance for international society with regard to cooperation in the field of economic and social development.

The role of the United Nations should be further strengthened to translate these documents into tangible results. The United Nations has an important role in persuading developed countries fully to implement their commitments concerning official development assistance and should pay due attention to resolving the issue of external debt.

We are of the view that the ongoing reform process of United Nations-affiliated organizations dealing with economic and social issues and of the United Nations Secretariat should be carried out in such a way as to enable them to make the best use of their potential for development and cooperation.

Developed countries are urged to be wise enough to foresee that replacing the present unfair international economic relations with new ones that are more fair, will, in the long term, be beneficial to them, and they should cooperate fully with other Member States in enhancing the role of the United Nations in that direction.

We appreciate and support the joint efforts of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America to expand and strengthen regional cooperation for political sovereignty and socio-economic development in a spirit of collective self-reliance.

We support Syria and other Arab countries in their just struggle to seek a fair and comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem based on the principle of land for peace, and hold that Israel should withdraw from all occupied Arab territories.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea adheres to the main ideal of our foreign policy of independence, peace and friendship in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and will continue to do so in the future.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will make every sincere effort for the success of deliberations on all agenda items that are before the General Assembly at this session.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire and former President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy.

Mr. Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) (*interpretation from French*): The illustrious election of the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations at its fifty-second session is not only a well-deserved tribute to his country, Ukraine, in recognition of its important role on the international scene, but an acknowledgement of his own human and professional qualities and, above all, his rich experience in international relations and in the United Nations system. Furthermore, as his former colleague when I was Permanent Representative of my own country here for many years, I am personally delighted at this well-deserved demonstration of the confidence the international community has in him. It is therefore a pleasure for me, on behalf of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire, to address to him and to the other members of the Bureau our sincere congratulations and to assure him of our full support in the accomplishment of his mission.

I also extend my heartfelt thanks to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail, for his remarkable efforts to give decisive impetus to the process of the reform of our Organization.

Finally, I should like to extend my warmest congratulations to Mr. Kofi Annan, a worthy son of Africa, on his illustrious election as Secretary-General of the United Nations, and I pay heartfelt tribute to him for the great competence that he has unfailingly demonstrated at the head of the United Nations. In less than a year he has been able to instil our Organization with a new dynamism through actions that bear witness to his firm will to strengthen the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations and to improve its operations in facing the many complex demands of the world at the dawn of a new millennium. We assure him of the support of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire in his noble and exhilarating task.

I also take this opportunity to extend my warm congratulations to Mrs. Mary Robinson on her appointment to the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We consider her strong personality to be a guarantee of success in the delicate and important mission with which she has been entrusted. We assure her of our complete support in the exercise of her new functions.

Today, regardless of what our assessment of the work of the United Nations may be, it is necessary to recognize that it remains a unique and irreplaceable tool for dialogue among nations at the service of international peace and security.

Clearly, it is unanimously held that the United Nations is useful and that it must exist; with equal unanimity we call for its revitalization. The question of the reform of the United Nations is thus at the heart of this session, which strikingly demonstrates how necessary and urgent it is. The Secretary-General rightly proclaimed this session the session of reform.

Adapting the United Nations to make it better able to enter the next millennium seems to be the great challenge of the reform to which we all aspire.

But before expressing my delegation's observations on the Secretary-General's proposals for reform, I should like to share some of our major concerns, which I believe must be taken into account if the continent to which my country belongs is to experience real development commensurate with its immense potential. I wish to speak about conflict management in Africa and international cooperation for the economic and social development of Africa.

One cannot fail to note that over 60 per cent of the agenda of the Security Council is devoted to situations in Africa, and that of the 48 least developed countries, 35 are in Africa.

In respect of conflicts in Africa, our continent has taken charge of its own destiny. To this end, it established legal instruments at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Cairo in 1993, in the form of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. If this venture is going to work Africa needs above all the support of the international community in the framework of a partnership with the United Nations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter.

Thus in Liberia, at the end of a seven-year fratricidal war which devastated that fraternal country and caused enormous damage to neighbouring countries such as Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire that had to deal with massive flows of refugees and displaced persons, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was able to broker a peace process which led to the election of Mr. Charles G. Taylor as President of the Republic on 19 July 1997 in elections that the OAU and the United Nations recognized as just and democratic.

In the context of the meeting to support the reconstruction of Liberia which will take place tomorrow, I would like to make an urgent appeal to donor countries and international and non-governmental organizations to be generous, because a reconstructed and prosperous Liberia can only benefit our entire subregion.

While we are delighted at the positive development of the situation in Liberia, a military *coup d'état* on 25 May 1997 put an end to the constitutional order in Sierra Leone by overthrowing a democratically elected President, Mr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. Côte d'Ivoire immediately condemned the *coup d'état*, which belongs to a bygone era.

The thirty-third meeting of heads of State and Government of the OAU, held in Harare from 2 to 4 June 1997, by its decision 356 also condemned the *coup d'état*, as did the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Presidents of the Security Council on 27 May, 11 July and 6 August 1997, who all demanded the immediate and unconditional restoration of constitutional order.

Unfortunately, the negotiations initiated by the group of five States mandated by ECOWAS with the representatives of the junta in power in Freetown have so far not succeeded in achieving the objectives of the international community. Therefore, the heads of State, during the last ECOWAS summit, in Abuja on 28 and 29 August 1997, were obliged to take a certain number of measures which we hope will be endorsed by the Security Council to allow the Committee of Five to resume, with the complete support of the international community, new negotiations for a return to constitutional order in Sierra Leone, a country whose instability remains a serious threat to the fledgling Liberian democracy and the entire subregion.

In the view of the OAU, ECOWAS and the Security Council, the Abidjan peace agreement of 30 November 1996, signed by President Kabbah and the leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Mr. Foday Sankoh, remains the best framework for finding a definitive solution to the crisis in Sierra Leone. Once constitutional order is restored, Côte d'Ivoire is prepared to organize, together with the other guarantors of this agreement and the parties concerned, a conference aimed at reactivating the many organs of that agreement in order to find a lasting solution to this crisis.

In Central Africa, we remain profoundly concerned by the fratricidal battles now taking place in the Congo. In this respect, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to Mr. Omar Bongo, President of the Gabonese Republic, for his patient and courageous mediation in the inter-Congolese conflict. While urging him to continue his noble efforts, we regret the deterioration of the situation and above all the fact that no cease-fire has been accepted by the warring parties, which has prevented the establishment of an African interposition force.

In the Central African Republic, we welcome the role of the Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements (MISAB), which has helped stabilize the situation.

In respect of the crisis in the Comoros, we urgently appeal to all parties to give priority to dialogue and to respond favourably to the OAU initiative with a view to holding a conference in Addis Ababa to find a solution. We invite the international community to support the efforts of the OAU and to give the Comoros all the economic and financial assistance it needs to confront the difficulties it is facing, which are the root cause of the crisis.

With regard to Angola, we take note of the recent Security Council resolution 1130 (1997), which was adopted unanimously. While we welcome the recent measures taken by UNITA in response to the Council's appeal, we hope that it will persevere in that direction in order to meet all its obligations pursuant to the Lusaka Protocol.

Finally, in respect of the question of Western Sahara, we applaud the progress made during the series of meetings under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Western Sahara, Mr. James Baker III, with a view to holding a referendum on self-determination.

Given the renewed upsurge of instability and conflict in many parts of Africa, we fervently appeal to the United Nations to organize a regional conference in collaboration with the OAU and ECOWAS to deal with the illicit circulation of small arms in the West African subregion, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 51/45.

In the same context, we are delighted with the results of the Oslo conference on anti-personnel landmines, and in view of the human disasters that this type of weapon continues to cause in Africa and the world over, we urge all States to adhere to the results and respect the terms.

My delegation believes that the present state of our continent requires a concerted policy of international security and implementation of preventive strategies, and Côte d'Ivoire intends to be actively involved. This is why, in defining recently new missions for Côte d'Ivoire's armed forces, President Henri Konan Bédié specified that they can henceforth participate in peacekeeping operations and that they stand ready to carry out possible protection and security missions which might be conferred upon them by the international community.

More specifically, it seems to us increasingly necessary to have a standing African interposition force. In western Africa, for example, ECOWAS, drawing from the experience of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the settlement of the Liberian conflict, could envisage the reorganization of this force in order to make it a genuine subregional force. In this context, consultations for the establishment of a peacekeeping force are under way in the framework of the Agreement on Non-Aggression and Assistance in Matters of Defense (ANAD) which includes Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Benin, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Togo.

The elements of the ANAD peacekeeping force would be coordinated in predetermined tactical or logistical modules in a state of operational readiness on their respective territories and could be sent into action at short notice. These stand-by elements could be regrouped at the request of ECOWAS, the OAU or the United Nations.

However effective our rapid-reaction capacity may be, we will have to seek, above all, to strengthen the effective rule of democracy and the rule of law in each of our countries in order to avoid crises turning into armed conflict.

Above all, every country must seek to achieve political stability and to promote social progress by establishing reliable democratic institutions based on freedom and justice and which guarantee the protection of the citizen and individual rights. We must develop the elements of good governance and promote the emergence of responsible society.

For its part, Côte d'Ivoire under the leadership of President Henri Konan Bédié, is endeavouring day by day to strengthen democracy and the rule of law by resolute action towards a peaceful democracy.

Recent measures in this connection have been announced, including the forthcoming opening of the Government to the opposition, the granting of status to the leaders of the opposition parties represented in Parliament; the creation of a Senate whose President will be acting Head of State in the event of a power vacuum; and the creation of a National Commission for monitoring and arbitration of elections. It will be presided over by a judge and made up of personalities and representatives of the leading political parties, along with international observers from the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union and the Canadian Electoral Committee. All of those elements are contributing to speeding the progress of democracy in Côte d'Ivoire.

Lastly, our people remain profoundly committed to the culture of peace, and it is to that commitment that Côte d'Ivoire owes its unquestioned political stability, based on the constancy of social dialogue and on the desire for shared progress that strengthens social unity. That is why my delegation, along with a number of co-sponsors, intends to submit to this session of the General Assembly, as it did at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council held last July at Geneva, a draft resolution proclaiming the year 2000 as the international year for the culture of peace.

My second subject of concern relates to the effects of globalization on African economies with respect to access to foreign markets, the volume of official development assistance and favourable treatment for foreign debt.

With regard to access to foreign markets, globalization, carried out in the name of liberalization and competitiveness, has led to the erosion and even the eradication of preferences that allow the goods of our countries to gain access to the markets of developed countries. We must be given time to adapt, or be compensated in some other way, if our countries are to participate in international trade to their full potential. We commend the recent United States initiative, "Growth and opportunity in Africa", which is aimed, *inter alia*, at promoting the access of African goods to the American market.

With regard to the effect of globalization on the volume of official development assistance, we note that for all the enthusiasm for the development of the private sector — development which we welcome, recognizing that private investment is the driving force of economic growth — a trend towards a decline in official

development assistance, despite its importance in the fight against poverty in our countries. That trend concerns us, because official development assistance is essential in supporting our domestic efforts, above all in sectors related to the development of human resources. We therefore urge the donor countries to redouble their efforts to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product.

Lastly, with regard to the question of foreign debt, there is now broad agreement that without favourable treatment for the stock of African debt, particularly in the most heavily indebted countries, no economic recovery programme can produce the desired long-term positive effects. We must therefore insist that serious consideration be given to measures in this regard. We welcome the measures recently taken in favour of Uganda, Bolivia and Burkina Faso within the framework of the debt-alleviation Initiative of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Paris Club. I am delighted to learn that my own country, Côte d'Ivoire, along with Mozambique and Guyana, will be the next to benefit from that Initiative. I would also note that my country is involved in a satisfactory dialogue with the London Club with a view to a significant restructuring of our commercial debt.

Turning to the question of United Nations reform, which lies at the heart of this session, we must distinguish between two aspects that dovetail to form a single coherent and logical unit. We have on the one hand the reforms being set in motion by Member States and on the other the programme of reforms proposed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/51/950) of 14 July 1997.

With regard to the reforms being driven by Member States, I would refer to the activities of various open-ended Working Groups of the General Assembly. Having personally been privileged to conduct the consultations that led to the establishment of three of those Groups during my own term of office as President of the forty-ninth session, I am pleased to note the relatively positive results of two of them: the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on An Agenda for Development and the Open-ended High-Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System. The States participating in those Groups have shown a magnificent spirit of solidarity.

The Agenda for Development, adopted last June by the General Assembly, is an important stage in the dialogue between nations on international cooperation for development. It establishes the consensus framework within which developed and developing countries can work to establish on a more solid basis a renewed and strengthened partnership for development based on mutual advantage.

The Open-ended High-Level Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, which has had to deal mainly with the revitalization of the General Assembly and the Secretariat, has produced recommendations that are part of the dynamics of the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General, *inter alia*, to rationalize the work of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies. My delegation is pleased with those positive results.

With regard to the High-Level Open-ended Working Group on the Financial Situation of the United Nations and the Open-ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council, we cannot help but feel frustrated that they are apparently bogged down and have not made the expected progress.

We are all aware of the crucial importance of the financial situation of the United Nations. The success of the entire reform process depends on a solution to that question. We should like to reaffirm here the need for all Member States to fulfil their obligations under Article 19 of the Charter, namely, to honour their financial obligations towards the United Nations fully, on time and without conditions. Similarly, we express our complete support for the principle of capacity to pay as a basis for the scale of assessments. We believe it is necessary to deal with those questions courageously and responsibly in order to provide our Organization with a viable, sound and solid financial base.

Turning to the important question of Security Council reform, our position is that of the African Group as defined at the recent Summit Meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at Harare, which stressed that the new configuration of the Security Council must reflect the realities of today's world through a geographically equitable representation of all the regions of the world. In that connection, my delegation, while in favour of the admission of Germany and Japan as permanent members of the Security Council, is of the opinion that Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Asia, should also be represented as permanent members of the Security Council.

The new permanent members should have the same prerogatives as the present permanent members, in

particular as regards the right of the veto, which, if not done away with entirely, should be restricted to the conditions set forth in Chapter VII of the Charter.

Turning to the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General, I want to express my delegation's sincere congratulations on the work accomplished. These reforms are the broadest and most profound that we have ever seen. My delegation therefore supports them enthusiastically.

It is our expectation that this reform process will lead to the promotion of the economic and social development of less developed Member States, the strengthening of multilateralism and an increase in the United Nations effectiveness and credibility.To accomplish that, we must see to it that the reform exercise is not confined to an obsessive desire purely and simply to reduce costs.

The measures aimed at increasing the Secretary-General's guidance and management capacity seem to us amply justified. In fact, the presence of a Deputy Secretary-General, a Senior Management Group and a Strategic Planning Unit will provide the Secretary-General with an internal support mechanism that will considerably strengthen his authority and his overall control system-wide.

The new configuration of the Secretariat organizational chart is attractive in its concision and coherence, but above all in its objective of effectiveness. Nonetheless, the comprehensive measures aimed at regrouping 12 entities and administrative units into five services should not result in either a decline in the programme level of operational activities for development or in a decrease in the quality of technical cooperation services due to a reduction of staff.

In the same context, the establishment of a Development Group composed mainly of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) should not affect the dynamic nature of their activities in the field.

Lastly, the proposals of the Secretary-General to refocus the work of the General Assembly on high-priority questions and to reduce the duration of its sessions reflect a concern for rationalization that we fully support.

We agree with the Secretary-General's statement that reform is a continuous process and not a one-time event. In fact, this reform is the result of an entire series of reflections that began in the 1970s within and outside the United Nations system to adapt it to the changes that have taken place since 1945. I have in mind the report of the Ford Foundation, the Bertrand report, the work of the Carlsson group and the work of many universities in the United States and in Europe, whose research clarified many aspects of our debates, especially during the work of the working groups on the different aspects of reform.

Nonetheless, any reform is above all part of a certain logic aimed at achieving an objective. But its success in the final analysis will depend on the quality of the individuals who are going to implement it, and above all on the political will of the States that will be called upon to work together to respect the spirit of compromise that made it possible to arrive at the package.

For its part, Côte d'Ivoire is prepared to participate actively with other delegations when the time comes in the constructive consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals for reform. Their consequences involve all of us.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for External Relations and Cooperation of Burundi, His Excellency Mr. Luc Rukingama.

Mr. Rukingama (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the delegation of Burundi, which we have the distinguished honour to lead in the work of this session of the General Assembly, and on our own behalf, allow us first and foremost to extend the friendly greetings of the President of the Republic of Burundi, Mr. Pierre Buyoya, as well as those of the Government and all the people of Burundi.

The delegation of Burundi is delighted at the unanimous choice of the President of the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. His lofty, moral and intellectual qualities, his long and rich diplomatic experience and his in-depth knowledge of the current concerns of the planet no doubt augur well for a ringing success in his term of office. Our country offers him its full support.

At the same time, we would like to extend our sincere congratulations to his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, who so brilliantly conducted the work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

We would also like to pay enthusiastic tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his continuing tireless efforts to promote the ideals of this world Organization.

Thanks to the institutions and bodies of the United Nations system, millions of refugees and persons displaced or scattered in the wake of internal conflicts, national disasters and other emergency situations have benefited from substantial humanitarian assistance, particularly in Africa. The Great Lakes region has received special attention in this regard.

Aside from peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operations on the African continent, it is important to underscore and welcome the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. I would like to take this opportunity to launch an appeal to all our bilateral and multilateral partners to mobilize the necessary resources for the financing of this Initiative, whose fundamental importance for the development of Africa is obvious.

For four years Burundi has been going through an unprecedented crisis that has been marked by numerous crimes and acts of genocide. Aside from the blind extermination of hundreds of thousands of human lives, armed groups have attacked the economic, health, educational and administrative infrastructures of the country. In short, the political change that occurred on 25 July 1996 took place just in time to save the country from genocide and nightmare.

Contrary to what a certain sector of international public opinion would have us believe, the vast majority of the population of Burundi welcomed the new direction of the country with great enthusiasm and relief. New hope was born with this change of political regime.

The results in the area of security were immediate. Aside from certain areas of insecurity related to sporadic attacks by armed groups, peace and security have returned to almost the entire national territory. But the population remains vigilant because terrorist bands have not yet disarmed. Essentially, they use the territory of Tanzania to launch massacres against women, children, men and the elderly.

These repeated attacks are at the source of the displacement and regrouping of populations. The Government has never decreed any regroupment policy. While the camps of displaced persons have not attracted particular attention, the so-called regroupment camps have stirred controversy in certain circles of international opinion that have been exploited and misinformed by terrorist groups such as the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD).

Today these centres of the dispossessed are gradually being closed. Day by day, people who have been displaced or regrouped are returning to their villages of origin when security conditions permit. A recent report indicates that in less than a month there will practically be no regrouped persons in the country's central provinces, which were the most affected.

We must, however, recognize that problems persist. At the humanitarian level the afflicted people live in deplorable conditions. Overcrowding, lack of sanitation, malnutrition, lack of health care and all sorts of epidemics are the daily plight of the dispossessed.

My Government wishes to place on record its real appreciation for all the support of our bilateral and multilateral partners to relieve the misery of these deprived populations. We appeal again to the international community to increase humanitarian assistance to the afflicted populations in order to meet their food, health and clothing needs. In order to ensure the reintegration of the victims, the Government appeals for assistance for reconstruction and economic recovery.

In the context of its vast social reintegration effort, the Government of Burundi invites all Burundi refugees, wherever they may be, to return voluntarily to their country. It is prepared to welcome them with open arms and in conditions of complete security and dignity. I would like to take this opportunity to request the assistance of neighbouring countries, in particular Tanzania, as well as of international organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to facilitate the return of our exiled brothers. In the past year more than 160,000 Burundi refugees have voluntarily returned to their home provinces.

Since the political changes of 25 July 1996, the principal objectives of the Government of the Republic of Burundi have been to ward off the spectre of genocide, to restore State authority, to organize a peace process based on dialogue, to reintegrate afflicted people, to rebuild and revitalize the economy and to democratize institutions.

At present the great majority of the Burundi population is determined to work to restore peace. This is why the widespread genocide that was foreseen, and began, has been contained and stopped. I can today affirm in all certainty that this danger has been averted. To the dismay of certain prophets of doom and apocalypse, the Burundi nation has not fallen apart either. The peace process under way in Burundi is aimed precisely at laying the foundation for a lasting peace.

Since the beginning of this year the Government has initiated throughout the country a series of workshops in preparation for a genuine national debate, with the goal of leading the Burundi people to discuss frankly all the country's problems. The governmental team is now engaged in speeding up the peace process, and several initiative have been taken in this regard. A round table bringing together all the internal actors has just taken place in the centre of the country. It is in this context as well that the Burundi peace conference, originally planned to take place in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) from 30 June to 2 July 1997 was held at UNESCO headquarters from 26 to 28 September 1997. Some 50 Burundi political actors, along with about 30 international observers, took part in those meetings.

That conference was designed to involve all the Burundi people, at home and abroad, in political dialogue, taking into account different political and socio-professional leanings. Even those who chose the route of violence participated in that forum in great numbers. That event thus marks an important step in the Burundi peace process.

Despite the visible difficulties, the Government of Burundi is determined to negotiate with the various actors in Burundi — including the armed factions — without exception. Thus, the phase of the peace negotiations that could not be held in Arusha on 25 August 1997 as originally planned — as a result of difficulties connected to the mediation arrangements — are going to be resumed very shortly. Consultations are under way on this matter, and, true to its programme, the Government will participate.

In this context, I would like to recall that my Government asked for a postponement of the 25 August 1997 meeting only so that it could better consult with its partners, improve the mediation arrangements and find a location more amenable to dialogue, outside of Tanzania.

After that postponement the President of the United Republic of Tanzania called for a summit of the Heads of State of the region in Dar es Salaam, which was held on 3 and 4 September 1997.

The Government of the Republic of Burundi, which was not invited, expresses its regret that it had no role in that summit. It considers that at these meetings devoted entirely to the Burundi conflict its presence is indispensable so that it can provide information and explanations that will enlighten the Heads of State of the region, in the interest of peace in Burundi.

The Burundi peace process must involve dialogue and negotiation among the Burundi people. At the conclusion of the talks, a negotiated transitional government will be put in place to lead the country in the direction pointed by the Burundi people themselves. The ultimate objective is to put in place democratic institutions that all can trust.

The Government of the Republic of Burundi again expresses its concern regarding the mediation arrangements and the host country for the mediation. No process can lead to peace in Burundi if it is not developed in cooperation with the Burundi people and carried out with their complete agreement. It is thus imperative that there be greater consultations between the mediator and the Burundi people — in particular with the Government that is charged with leading the country and that has the weighty responsibility of extracting it from crisis.

To increase the confidence of all the parties in the mediation and to follow the universally recognized rules for such undertakings, the Government of the Republic of Burundi believes that the mediator must be supported by other personalities and by experts in the techniques of conflict resolution — people who have no personal stake in the Burundi problem.

The Burundi peace process will remain stalled, if Tanzania — the mediating country, the host country of the mediation — having taken over the Burundi Embassy in Dar es Salaam, continues to play the triple role of host country for the armed factions responsible for the genocide in Burundi, promoter of sanctions against Burundi and overweening mediator.

The objection of the Government of the Republic of Burundi to the holding of the talks in Tanzania is thus easily understood. It is based essentially on the tension

that has been created by the refugee camps that Tanzania has set up all along its border with Burundi. Many of them are armed, and from them deadly raids are regularly launched on Burundi territory. This tension has been exacerbated by the hostile campaign waged by the Tanzanian authorities in several African capitals precisely on the eve of the opening of the talks, originally set to take place in Arusha on 25 August 1997.

Further, the Government of the Republic of Burundi does not understand why the fifth summit of the Heads of the State of the region requested it to halt the process now under way. Such a halt would unleash disorder and public insecurity in the country. No Burundi citizen would be able to understand how the judicial system could punish minor infractions while at the same time it was unable to try cases of political assassination and acts of genocide. The halting of legal proceedings under way and scheduled is thus unacceptable. The ideal is to assure each defendant a just and fair trial in which the right to a defence is guaranteed. The Government has already made a commitment to do all it can to that end, and we thank the United Nations for its assistance in this area.

In this regard, the establishment of an international criminal tribunal for Burundi, which the Government of Burundi has requested of the United Nations, is now urgently needed, both to combat impunity and to give the peace process now under way a chance. Under no pretext whatsoever should any criminal, nor anyone responsible for genocide, be shielded.

It is clear that the Burundi peace process is being held back by numerous constraints.

My Government's efforts to restore peace and security have been compromised by the completely unjust and illegal blockade that has been maintained by neighbouring countries since 31 July 1997. Paradoxically, the supporters of these inhumane economic sanctions claim that they wish to restore peace in Burundi. However, those who know my country know that it is poor and landlocked and has been beset by almost four years of war.

To support sanctions by word and by deed is tantamount to killing more children and more disaster victims through hunger, disease, poverty and war. No neighbouring country should adopt such a stance, especially when we take account of the concern that my country has always shown for its neighbours when they were confronted with the same problems.

The measures to mitigate the economic sanctions agreed in Arusha last 16 April have not been implemented in their entirety. Difficulties remain, particularly in respect of air transport and the supply of humanitarian fuel. How then, under these circumstances, can we speak of mitigation when the released goods cannot reach their beneficiaries?

From this rostrum, my delegation calls once again on the neighbouring countries in the subregion responsible for the blockade to please lift these inhumane and degrading sanctions immediately. It strongly urges the international community to do everything in its power to make these countries understand the pressing need to lift these unjust sanctions, which only impoverish the poorest and enrich the richest — measures that ravage the most vulnerable sectors of society.

I should like to remind the Assembly that my Government has already met all the demands made by the countries of the subregion, which served as a pretext for the imposition of the sanctions. These include the restoration of the National Assembly and of the political parties and the commencement of negotiations with the rebel army. Unfortunately, at the risk of hampering the process, each summit gives rise to new conditions. That is why the quest for peace in Burundi often resembles the movement of Sisyphus' stone.

My country, moreover, continues to be confronted with repeated border attacks by armed terrorist groups that are based in a neighbouring country, Tanzania. These criminal bands recruit in camps housing Burundi refugees along the common border, in flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Some of the rebels are based 15 kilometres from the Burundi-Tanzania border. From there, it takes but a step to infiltrate Burundi. In that one little step, they can massacre — as they did last April — several innocent Burundi people.

In the face of this situation, my Government urges the United Nations firmly to condemn these terrorist organizations and to bring pressure to bear on those countries receiving them to separate genuine refugees from tribal terrorist groups.

In order to promote the necessary communication in the context of a political dialogue, we ask Tanzania once again to liberate the Embassy of Burundi in Dar Es

Salaam in order to facilitate diplomatic relations current negotiations and the settlement of the question of refugees.

The Great Lakes region is experiencing an unprecedented crisis. One of the main reasons for this upheaval is doubtless the problem of refugees. The spiral of violence that is engulfing our subregion has prompted a vast trans-border movement of peoples fleeing warfare and insecurity in their country or origin. Some are innocent people who fear for their physical security, but some belong to criminal groups. Faithful to its policy of dialogue and concertation, the Government of the Republic of Burundi will spare no effort to initiate contacts with its neighbours in order to explore together appropriate ways and means to resolve this situation. The goal of this endeavour is to work together to restore a climate of security on our common borders, in keeping with our tradition of good-neighbourliness.

Africa is currently facing numerous challenges. A low rate of economic growth; intense demographic pressures; a decline in agricultural production; the continuing decrease in bilateral and multilateral aid — the result of new alliances; the burden of debt servicing; and socio-political conflicts — these are the many pitfalls along the path to Africa's development. Our continent will never achieve its development if it does not meet these challenges, which is why my country resolutely favours consolidating regional and subregional entities, which would represent a crucial stage for progress in Africa. In this connection, we welcome the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, launched officially on 15 March 1996. We firmly support and encourage this ambitious programme, which was set up to support our continent in its development efforts.

Our continent, Africa, is doubtless one of the most turbulent areas on the planet. The efforts to democratize political institutions on which so many hopes were pinned have, regrettably, experienced dramatic setbacks as a result of factors linked with ethnicity, a lack of preparedness and a lack of flexibility.

With respect to the Great Lakes region, Burundi welcomes the positive changes occurring in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as they can contribute to improving the political situation and promote trade throughout the region. We can therefore only encourage this friendly and brotherly country to move ahead. We also urge the international community to support it.

Rwanda, our neighbour, is making a great effort at stabilization and reconciliation. International solidarity vis-à-vis this country should also be encouraged.

At the same time, it is deplorable to note that Congo (Brazzaville), a brotherly country, has also been the site of fratricidal confrontation. In that context, we welcome the efforts made by the President of Gabon, His Excellency Mr. Omar Bongo; by the Special Representative of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Mr. Mohamed Sahnoun; and by other mediators, national and international, in their efforts to find a negotiated settlement to the Congo problem.

My Government encourages our Angolan brothers and sisters to complete the implementation of the Lusaka peace agreements.

Following a protracted conflict, Liberia has successfully organized democratic elections with the support of the international community. We wish that country peace and stability.

In the Middle East, the deadlock of the peace process between Israel and Palestine can be overcome only if hard-liners on both sides show greater flexibility.

My Government has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on the reform of the Organization. Insofar as it seeks greater efficiency and strives for mobilizing means not to maintain a hefty administration but rather to achieve the goal of international solidarity, particularly in the area of development, my Government supports that reform.

My delegation shares with the Secretary-General his concern for efficiency and economy: efficiency in an administration that is streamlined, and efficiency in efforts to combat poverty as well as in efforts at capacity-building, particularly in the area of development.

With respect to Security Council reform, my Government supports the provisions taken in the context of the last OAU Summit, which met in Harare, Zimbabwe. The terms of the common African position have recently been communicated by the Chairman of the OAU in this forum. Moreover, the developing countries must be properly represented in the Council. Beyond the question of representation, my delegation is convinced that reform of the Security Council must above all

involve its methods of work and its adaptation to the requirements of today's realities.

In keeping with our position as stated during this session of the General Assembly, my Government firmly supports the establishment of an international criminal court that would be entrusted with prosecuting and punishing persons responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Despite the many difficulties that my country, Burundi, has faced since the national tragedy of October 1993, it has always sought to be present at the annual sessions of the General Assembly of our Organization. This assiduous presence attests to our unfaltering attachment to the lofty ideals promoted and defended by the United Nations. Despite the political and economic crisis exacerbated by the blockade abusively imposed upon my people, the Government of the Republic of Burundi has been able to remit an amount of $116,000 dollars since April 1997 as its contribution to the regular budget of the United Nations. Despite the difficult economic climate, Burundi will do its utmost to continue, to the extent that it is able, to honour its commitments and to support our Organization.

Before concluding, I should like once again to recall that Burundi is resolved to emerge from this crisis affecting our country, and will do so through dialogue. The sooner the next session is programmed, the better. We hope that the obstacles that prevented the meeting of 25 August 1997 will be overcome.

My country supports the principle of expanding the Security Council, but the methodology which will be adopted to that end is of decisive importance. We hope that all this reform will imbue the United Nations system with the youthful vitality and energy necessary to redress the shortcomings of the past, to consolidate the achievements of the present and to lay solid and promising foundations for the beginning of the next millennium.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

As several representatives have requested to exercise their right of reply, may I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now call on the representative of the United States of America.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): The United States objects to the remarks of the Foreign Minister of Iraq. For Iraq to rejoin the family of responsible nations, the path is clear. Iraq must comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions. Iraq must abandon efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction. Iraq must cease efforts to conceal evidence of its programme for weapons of mass destruction from the United Nations Special Commission. Iraq must cooperate fully with the Special Commission in accordance with all relevant resolutions. Until today, Iraq has failed to do this. Iraq must return the properties and archives it stole from the Government and people of Kuwait. Until today Iraq has failed to do this. Iraq must cooperate with the International Committee of the Red Cross and with Red Crescent Societies and must fully account for the more than 600 Kuwaiti, Saudi and other prisoners of war and missing in action. Until today, Iraq has failed to do this. In order to purchase the humanitarian supplies provided for under Security Council resolution 1111 (1997), Iraq should have begun selling oil on 8 June 1997. Iraq failed to do this. So the Security Council was obliged to act on behalf of the Iraqi people.

We remind the Foreign Minister that the United States and its coalition partners will continue to enforce no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq in support of United Nations Security Council resolutions 678 (1990), 687 (1991) and 688 (1991). The United States repeats its call on the Government of Iraq to follow the path of full compliance with all relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Kuwait.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I express my regret at being obliged once again to take the floor in right of reply, especially after Kuwait, in its statement before the General Assembly last Monday, enumerated in full — enumerated in full — the legal obligations of Iraq which are stipulated in Security Council resolution 687 (1991), as well as other relevant resolutions.

Despite the fact that the Foreign Minister of Iraq did not mention Kuwait by name in his statement, his allegation that Iraq has implemented all its obligations in accordance with the Security Council resolutions prompts us now to set the record straight before the Member

countries here and to reveal that these allegations are false. The responsible Iraqi officials base their practices with their people and with the other countries on a saying which is very well known to all: "Continue lying until you believe your lies". My reply would be that "You can fool some people once, but you definitely cannot fool all of the people all of the time".

The representatives of the Iraqi regime attempt to obliterate from the record of their responsibilities all the obligations related to Kuwait which are stipulated in the Security Council resolutions that were accepted by Iraq with no conditions or restrictions. The Security Council and the international community attach great importance to these obligations, which have not yet been implemented — first and foremost, the question of the Kuwaiti detainees and prisoners of war, as well as citizens of third countries; the return of the Kuwaiti stolen properties; cooperation with the Special Commission; and also the demonstration of peaceful intentions by the Iraqi regime vis-à-vis Kuwait, as well as neighbouring countries.

All the members of the Security Council, without any distinction, demand that Iraq implement these obligations in every statement made when the Council periodically reviews the subject of sanctions against Iraq. Last November Council members instructed the President to express, in a presidential statement, the Council's grave concern at the lack of any progress on the question of prisoners of war and properties. I think that this presidential statement is the best evidence of the falsity of Iraq's allegations that it has implemented all its obligations.

The representatives of the Iraqi regime strive hard to limit the remaining responsibilities to only one particular subject — the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. Elimination of weapons of mass destruction undoubtedly is very important. However, and definitely, is not the one and only remaining obligation by Iraq. Despite this, even when we deal with this subject in particular, the record of Iraq is very far removed from any full compliance vis-à-vis the demands that were made. The many reports by the Special Commission on the destruction of these weapons are perhaps the best indicator in that regard. The representatives of the Iraqi regime attempt and strive hard to project their problem as if it is a problem between them and a member or a couple of member States of the Security Council. However, it is no secret that, as a matter of fact, the problem of the Iraqi regime is with all the members of the Security Council. Consequently, its problem is with the international community, through the United Nations.

There is only one very short road leading to the alleviation of the suffering of our brothers, the Iraqi people. However, it is a one-way street: it consists in the implementation of all the relevant Security Council resolutions, without selectivity or conditions.

Mr. Simonovic (Croatia): On behalf of my own delegation and the delegations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Slovenia, I would like to make certain clarifications with regard to the comments made earlier today by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, His Excellency Mr. Ivan Antonovich, concerning the status of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the United Nations.

According to resolution 47/1, adopted by the General Assembly, the General Assembly

> "*Considers* that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) cannot continue automatically the membership of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the United Nations; and therefore decides that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) should apply for membership in the United Nations and that it shall not participate in the work of the General Assembly."

On the basis of that General Assembly resolution, as well as other resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, it is evident that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should, as a new State, apply for membership of the United Nations in accordance with the established procedures regarding the admission of new Members to the United Nations.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): We listened with disappointment to the remarks of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq with reference to Turkey. To set the record straight, I state once again Turkey's commitment to the preservation of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq. The current situation in the north of Iraq, however, is well known to the international community. We have to reckon that the continuing inability of Iraq to exercise its sovereignty over the totality of its territory is the result of the dangerous and aggressive policies that Iraq chose to follow in the past against its neighbours.

Iraq cannot blame any country but itself for the difficulties that it is encountering at present. Other countries of the region, including mine, are also suffering

from the consequences of Iraq's past aggressive policies. The existing de facto vacuum created in northern Iraq has made it possible for armed terrorist elements to establish a presence in the area and launch armed attacks into Turkish territory. These terrorist elements pose a major and unacceptable security threat to my country and to the lives and property of our people in the bordering areas. This is certainly not a flimsy pretext, as purported by Mr. Al-Sahaf.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister contended in his statement that Turkey, through measures of self-defence, has been interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq. I wish to leave it to the discretion of Member States to judge the seriousness of this contention, given the fact that Iraq has never complained about the presence of armed terrorist groups operating from Iraqi soil against Iraq's neighbours. Under the prevailing circumstances, and until Iraq is again in a position to re-establish its control in the north of its country by complying with all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, thereby satisfying the international community, the Turkish Government will not hesitate to take all appropriate and necessary measures to remove this threat, directed from northern Iraq at the lives and property of its people.

Mr. Gomersall (United Kingdom): The version of events which we heard this afternoon from the Foreign Minister of Iraq is another reminder of his Government's inability to accept any blame for all the misfortunes which have befallen the Iraqi people, and the facility with which Iraq finds ways to lay blame at the doors of others.

It is impossible to have any confidence in Iraq's professed keenness to establish good relations with its neighbours when the word "Kuwait" does not appear anywhere in the Foreign Minister's statement. The Foreign Minister seems to forget that sanctions were first imposed following Iraq's unprovoked aggression against a fellow Member State of the United Nations. Even now there are responsibilities to Kuwait under Security Council resolution 687 (1991) which remain unfulfilled — the accounting for missing Kuwaiti citizens and the return of property, among other items.

The Foreign Minister also seems to have forgotten to mention that sanctions remain in place only because of the Iraqi Government's failure to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular, its failure to meet the obligation to provide full and definitive accounting for Iraq's programme of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. In claiming that Iraq has fulfilled all the requirements of Security Council resolution 687 (1991), the Foreign Minister chooses to ignore the very clear reports of the Chairman of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). The continuing pattern of UNSCOM inspections, with three more incidents in the last few days, has intensified already strong suspicions that the Iraqi Government is concealing elements of its weapons of mass destruction programmes, in violation of the obligation to the United Nations.

The Iraqi Foreign Minister also spoke of the suffering of the Iraqi people, implying that this was the fault of anyone except his own Government. He failed to mention that it was his Government's prevarication that led to delays of over a year in implementing the oil-for-food scheme in Security Council resolution 986 (1995). His Government's decision to delay by more than two months the export of oil under Security Council resolution 1111 (1997) would have deprived the Iraqi people of the benefits due to them under this resolution had not the Security Council adopted an additional decision in Security Council resolution 1129 (1997), co-sponsored by the United Kingdom, to protect the Iraqi people once again from the folly and indifference of its Government.

The responsibility for Iraq's problems rests with the Iraqi Government. It knows what needs to be done to remove sanctions, and yet it consistently refuses to do it. Therefore, my Government's view is that the sanctions must remain until Iraq's obligations are fulfilled.

Mr. Samadi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The Foreign Minister of Iraq today made a number of unwarranted claims and baseless allegations against my country. The essence and the lack of seriousness of the old contentions are known to the Assembly, and I will not take up its time at this late hour to respond to them. However, I wish to set the record straight with regard to the latest incident to which he referred.

In the early hours of 29 September 1997, two heavily armed groups belonging to a terrorist organization based in Iraq crossed international borders and infiltrated the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran from Iraq. One group began its offensive operation from the Jelola base in Iraqi territory, moved forward through the Iraqi city of Khaneqein, crossed the international border and took up a position near the Iranian city of Ghasr-e-Shirin. At the same time the second terrorist group began its offensive operation from the Kut base in Iraqi territory, moved forward through

the Iraqi city of Hisan, crossed the international border and took up a position near the Iranian city of Mehran.

In an immediate response to these attacks by heavily armed terrorist groups against Iranian territory, and in exercise of the inherent right of self-defence recognized in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, the air force of the Islamic Republic of Iran took a limited and proportionate measure against the invading terrorists and the two bases in Iraq from which they had planned, mobilized and initiated their armed cross-border attack against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This limited defensive measure by the Iranian air force began at 7 a.m. on 29 September 1997 and concluded shortly thereafter. The Islamic Republic of Iran emphasizes that this defensive operation was aimed solely at the terrorists and their bases and was not intended to be against the Republic of Iraq. The cross-border attacks from Iraq against the Islamic Republic of Iran by organized subversive teams, such as the above-mentioned terrorist operations, are not incidental or infrequent, and have recently increased significantly. Based on the public admission of the terrorist organization on 31 August 1997, they had carried out 294 such cross-border attacks against the Islamic Republic of Iran in the preceding seven months. They have taken a human and material toll on Iranian border towns. It is regrettable that these attacks have been organized in collaboration with the military and intelligence establishment of Iraq in terms of planning, logistics, financing and even the escorting of terrorist infiltrators to the Iranian border.

While reiterating its commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran underlines that such behaviour on the part of the Government of Iraq, helping in or allowing its territory to be used for launching subversive activities against Iranian territory, is unacceptable and entails international responsibility.

Mr. Mwakawago (United Republic of Tanzania): In the light of the speech of the head of the delegation of Burundi this evening and, particularly, references made to my country in that speech, I would like to use the right of reply to clarify the situation and set the record straight.

However, my delegation wishes to exercise this right of reply at a later date.

Mr. Al-Hitti (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, I would like briefly but collectively to respond to all the remarks that were made and the criticisms levelled at us by a number of representatives of countries here. Allow me to begin with the question of weapons. All the world knows that more than 400 inspection teams have visited Iraq in the last seven years and that the inspection is very strict, now and in the future. This system allows nothing to go through it undetected. If the allegations made by the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland were correct and valid, I would like to ask them what this army of inspectors was doing. What was this army of international inspectors that came and inspected all Iraqi territories, north-east, west, central and south, doing then? They were even taking samples of air, water and soil at random and at different times. Is it reasonable that they can keep whole peoples, 22 million of them, as hostages until one country is convinced, that same country that is now explicitly and arrogantly stating through all its officials that even if Iraq implements all the Security Council resolutions, the United States will still use the power of veto to prevent the blockade from being lifted. Thus, it is totally indifferent to the death of hundreds of thousands of elderly people, women and children — all those who have died as a direct result of the blockade.

Does the international community need any more evidence of what Iraq has consistently said, that the Security Council resolutions are simply not the issue? The resolutions are merely a cruel trick used by some countries that do not like the nationalist regime in Iraq to keep Iraq constantly weak and under a blockade. We would like to ask a question. What issue requires the death of more than 1 million children, elderly people and women and destroys the presence and the future of a whole people? All this comes at a time when the question of human rights has become one of the very important objectives of the community of humankind at this time.

There are no illusions here. Even if we assume that there are technical loopholes related to this document or others concerning the disarmament of Iraq, do we have to implement machiavellian law which says that the end justifies the means, however brutal and inhuman the means might be? In line with this, is it permissible to have more than 1 million innocent Iraqi people die for this purpose and to have 4 million people fall sick through malnutrition and lack of medicine, not to mention the other millions of people who lack electricity, a basic education or other basic humanitarian necessities? Is this not a gross violation of human rights? Is this not a collective genocide as measured by any international

standard? Is it not true that the blockade thus imposed is a weapon of mass destruction? This is a silent and lethal weapon, more lethal than the American nuclear bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki because it has claimed more victims than those bombs.

Here, we would also like to ask how the officials of some of these countries, when they lecture us and preach to us in this hall about human rights, can at the same time be at peace with themselves, having taken part in killing these vast numbers of innocent people. Or are they burying their heads in the sand like an ostrich, so as not to hear the moans and the sound of suffering of the Iraqi people?

Allow me, in conclusion, to call once again on whoever holds a grudge against Iraq or its people to purge themselves of that evil, to let the logic of justice, peace and wisdom prevail, and to abandon the ideology of vengeance so that all our peoples can enjoy peace, prosperity and security.

Before concluding my statement, I would like to remark on two important subjects that were raised by the representatives of Member States.

As far as the Kuwaiti detainees and prisoners of war are concerned, to use the description of the representative of Kuwait, I would like to confirm that there are no prisoners of war or people missing in action in Iraq. We have said this several times before. As we all know, in all wars and conflicts there are always people missing, as in Viet Nam, for example. The representatives of Kuwait use this case as a pretext to prolong the unusual economic blockade against Iraq. I would like to confirm once again that my country is ready to cooperate in a spirit of goodwill with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent and with the Tripartite Commission to solve this humanitarian problem.

If Iraq had prisoners of war or persons missing in action from Kuwait as Kuwait claims, we would have released them after the end of the conflict, if for no other purpose than to deny this pretext to the Government of Kuwait.

With reference to Security Council resolution 986 (1995), it could not satisfy the basic requirements of the Iraqi people. Even if it were to be fully implemented, it would amount to some 26 cents per day per person. That resolution is not being implemented fully or in good faith, because the United States representative has continued to refuse to act upon or to suspend implementation of contracts to purchase food and medicine. That fact can be readily proved by anyone wishing to review the matter by studying the records of the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 661 (1990) to monitor the sanctions against Iraq. The small amelioration which the Iraqis have experienced in their lives as a result of implementing Security Council resolution 986 (1995) has consisted only of a small increase in their monthly rations of rice and flour. I am sure that you will agree with me that that does not solve the problem of the shortage of medicine and foodstuffs in Iraq.

Turning to Iran and Turkey, the pretexts are not acceptable in accordance with the standards of international law, especially those governing the inviolability of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States Members of the United Nations. The representatives of both Iran and Turkey have claimed that their military forces have attacked the bases of Iranian and Turkish opposition in Iraq. Imagine how the world would be were every Member State to follow such perverted logic. The world would thus become subject to the law of the jungle. I would ask Iran and Turkey the following question: in accordance with the logic which they have just used, would they be willing to allow Iraqi military aircraft to raid the opponents of the Iraqi Government who are sheltered by the Governments of Iran and Turkey on their respective territories?

I apologize for speaking at such length, but I have a number of replies to make, and I would ask for one more minute. The statement of Turkey in particular is fallacious. Iraq cannot exercise its sovereignty over the whole of its territory, not because it lacks the capability but because of the no-fly zones that have been imposed on us in northern and southern Iraq. The correct course for Turkey would be for it to refrain from becoming the pawn of a super-Power or a base for foreign troops which engage in acts of aggression against Iraq and its people until the central Government of Iraq can re-establish its authority in the north to ensure the return of security and stability at the borders between Iraq and Turkey.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): It is not my delegation's intention to engage here in a pointless argument with Iraq. The primary responsibility of each and every State is to protect and defend the lives, property and well-being of its citizens. This is all the more important when the threat comes from another country with or without the explicit consent of its Government.

We do not have to remind the Assembly that Iraq is the sole party responsible for the undesirable situation in which it finds itself today. Turkey is not ready to pay for the sins of others, in this case for those of Iraq. The prerequisites for enabling Iraq to exercise its authority over every inch of its territory are clearly stipulated in the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. Turkey, together with other Members of the Organization, has been encouraging Iraq all along to comply with the expectations of the world community to ensure a return to normalcy in the region and in our bilateral relations.

To conclude, I would like to underline once again, in the hope that it will be understood by our Iraqi friends, the determination of the Turkish Government to defend the sanctity of its borders as well as the safety of its citizens. My Government will not fail to take all appropriate measures with a view to safeguarding its legitimate security interests and protecting its people against terrorism.

Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I am sorry to have to ask to speak once again in exercise of the right of reply, but I must answer to what Iraq has said.

First, I would like to reconfirm the commitment expressed by our first response, given by our Permanent Representative. The representative of Iraq has alleged that Kuwait is exploiting the question of prisoners of war and detainees as a pretext for the sanctions against Iraq to continue. Our position is that the prolongation of sanctions or their lifting is not something that is within our competence. It is a responsibility which is solely within the competence of the Security Council.

As for Iraq's saying that it is prepared to cooperate with the International Committees of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, we have been hearing that year-in and year-out without anything actually happening on the ground. I have therefore limited my reply to the question of prisoners.

Mr. Al-Hitti (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Excuse me for having to ask to speak a second time, but it will not be for too long. I would merely like to mention the most recent comments of the representative of Turkey to the effect that the no-fly zones in both northern and southern Iraq are something imposed in accordance with Security Council resolutions. That is not the case. The imposition of no-fly zones in Iraq is a unilateral act on the part of the United States alone and is counter to international law and the Charter of the United Nations. There is no Security Council resolution imposing no-fly zones against Iraq.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.

United Nations

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General Assembly

Fifty-second Session

Official Records

23rd plenary meeting
Friday, 3 October 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

The President: The first speaker is the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Oman, His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Al-Alawi Bin Abdulla, on whom I now call.

Mr. Abdulla (Oman) *(interpretation from Arabic):* Mr. President, at the outset allow me to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election to preside over the work of this, the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. Your unanimous election reflects the active role of your country, Ukraine, with which my country, the Sultanate of Oman, enjoys relations of friendship and cooperation. We are fully confident that your diplomatic capabilities and skills will stand you in good stead in managing the work of the Assembly at its present session. My delegation assures you of its fullest cooperation in making this session a success and in achieving its desired objectives.

I would also like to pay special tribute to Ambassador Razali Ismail of friendly Malaysia for his successful and constructive efforts in steering the work of the General Assembly at its previous session.

By the same token, I wish to stress our continued support for the genuine efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, in restructuring the United Nations and in revitalizing its role in all areas of endeavours.

Owing to the arbitrary policy of the current Israeli Government since it came to power in late May of last year, the peace process in the middle East is going through a difficult phase. The rigidity of the Israeli Government has manifested itself in the non-implementation of what had been agreed upon with the Palestinian National Authority in Oslo and in its non-recognition of the land-for-peace formula, a principle on which the whole of the Madrid Conference was built and a measure which was accepted by all the parties as a foundation for reaching a just and lasting peace.

Israel's failure to comply in good faith with its international commitments and its continuation of building settlements in occupied Arab Jerusalem and other occupied Palestinian territories have resulted in the disruption of the peace process. Therefore, we fully understand the awesome responsibility that falls on the two sponsors of the peace process. We are confident that they, as well as other peace-supporting nations, particularly those of the European Union, are capable of narrowing the existing chasm between the Government of Israel and the Government of the Palestinian National Authority on the basis of justice and equity that will produce substantial progress which will restore a climate of trust and cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian Governments and that will renew hope once more among the fraternal people of Palestine as well as among the people of Israel for life in peace and harmony.

97-86140 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

My delegation wishes to recall that the status of Jerusalem was one of those issues that were agreed to be deferred to the final stage of negotiations. However, the measures being taken by the Israeli Government in Jerusalem and its vicinity totally run counter to what was agreed upon in Madrid in 1991.

We therefore call upon the international community to express solidarity with the Government of the Palestinian National Authority in resisting these Israeli policies which lead to more tension, violence and bloodshed.

Proceeding from its conviction of the importance of the peace process in the Middle East and the need to contribute to giving it impetus for further progress, my country, the Sultanate of Oman, has actively participated in supporting that process. It continues to adhere to the goals of establishing peace in the Middle East in accordance with the relevant resolutions and agreements which have been concluded. Therefore, we demand that those agreements be implemented, since peace is an imperative, and is in the interests of all peoples in the region, ridding them of all forms of repression, terror, poverty, and hunger.

The Sultanate of Oman reaffirms its solidarity with the fraternal people of Palestine and supports the peaceful position of the Government of the Palestinian National Authority, which aims at Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

We call upon the international community to enhance the peace process by providing its support to the Government of the Palestinian National Authority, both materially and psychologically, thus enabling it to establish the foundations for stability and security in the Palestinian territories and to build the necessary infrastructures for the Palestinian economy, which is an important factor that will safeguard what has been achieved and what we hope will be achieved in the future.

We also call upon the people of Israel and all political actors in that country to promote and defend the peace process. We also reject all forms of terror, repression and fear, which have had an adverse impact on the national interests of all the peoples in the region, including Israel itself.

We reaffirm the desire of Syria to establish a just and comprehensive peace, a desire it has always reiterated in all international forums. We support the Syrian position calling for the resumption of the negotiations with the current Israeli Government from where they ended with the previous Israeli Government, based on full and complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan to the boundaries prior to 4 June 1967, with the concomitant mutual obligations to guarantee the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace between Syria and Israel and in the region at large.

We would also like to reaffirm the importance of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese territories to internationally recognized borders, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978). The world has witnessed the increased tension between Israel and Lebanon over the past two years, which has inflicted tremendous financial losses on the Lebanese economy, not to mention the killing of innocent civilians and the spread of terror and destruction, which is a natural result of the continuation of Israel's occupation of a part of Lebanese territory.

The phenomena of violence and terrorism that target the lives of innocents require strengthened international efforts and a firmer will to stand against these heinous acts. In this regard, I reiterate my country's condemnation of these phenomena and its absolute rejection of all forms of violence and terrorism. We call on the international community to coordinate its efforts to put an end to these acts and to guarantee that those who commit or advocate such crimes be brought to justice.

With regard to the situation between the United Nations and Iraq, we believe that the implementation of resolution 986 (1995) and its further extension are important steps that deserve the acknowledgement and the commendation of the international community, for it will alleviate some of the sufferings endured by the brotherly people of Iraq. My country has welcomed this and expresses its satisfaction that the cooperation between Iraq and the Special Commission is being built on a foundation of trust that will certainly enable its new Chairman, Ambassador Richard Butler, to submit an appropriate final report on the future of the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq.

Despite these encouraging indicators between the United Nations and Iraq, some fundamental issues remain that have yet to register any progress, particularly the question of Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees of other nationalities, and the return of Kuwaiti properties. This question is of particular importance and we would reaffirm here the urgent need for the United Nations to make greater efforts and to establish further contacts with

Iraq with the aim of putting this issue to rest, since it is largely related to humanitarian and social matters.

My country attaches primary importance to the peace and security of the Gulf region, cooperation and coexistence among its nations and peoples in accordance with the principles of international law, peaceful neighbourly relations, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. On this understanding, we have been striving, in the context of the combined efforts of the Gulf Cooperation Council, to solve all disputes and sources of tension, whatever they may be, between the countries of the region through dialogue and peaceful means. Thus, the question of Lesser Tunb, Greater Tunb and Abu Musa islands constitutes a dispute that might jeopardize the peace and stability which we are seeking. In this regard, we support all efforts aimed at solving this question through direct peaceful dialogue and legal means between the concerned parties, the United Arab Emirates and the Islamic Republic of Iran, in a manner that will safeguard neighbourly relations, stability, security and peace in the region.

With regard to the situation in Somalia, my country applauds the efforts recently made by Egypt that led to the signing of an agreement between the leaders of the Somali factions. We call on those factions to pursue the peace dialogue among them in order to attain Somali national unity. We call upon the United Nations to render concrete support to Egypt's efforts to help the Somali factions to implement their national programme.

My country has continuously supported international efforts aimed at strengthening international peace and security. In this regard, my country's announcement at the previous session of the General Assembly of its accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) emphasizes our policy, which was followed by other steps represented by its deposit of the instrument of ratification in early 1997 and its initiation of negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency to finalize a safeguards agreement, in accordance with our obligations as set down in the Treaty.

The Sultanate of Oman, while taking this historic step, certainly hopes to bestow more strength and credibility on the Treaty, which it considers to be the most important multilateral disarmament treaty, by encouraging all countries that have not yet joined the NPT to do so. In this regard, we call on Israel in particular to expedite its accession to the Treaty and to place all its nuclear facilities under international supervision, which we believe will create an atmosphere of trust and confidence and limit the level of armament in the Middle East — a move that would bring about just and permanent peace to the region.

The Chemical Weapon Convention is no doubt an important multilateral disarmament treaty prohibiting a whole category of weapons of mass destruction amenable to verification measures. All of us have an obligation to uphold these measures for the benefit and welfare of humanity at large. In order to avoid a similar fate for the NPT, we believe that all nations should accede to it. Preserving the universality and comprehensive nature of this Treaty should constitute one of the highest goals on the international community's list of priorities.

At a time when the international community is preparing to enter the twenty-first century, the African continent continues to suffer the blight of endless, successive wars. These wars have taken the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians and created more than 6 million refugees and about 12 million displaced persons in the continent.

We add our voice to those who have called on the African nations within areas of conflict to exert every possible effort, including regular negotiations, to provide an environment conducive to national reconciliation among the warring factions and to enable the refugees to return securely to their lands through safe passages.

My country supports the United Nations role in coordinating worldwide efforts — through international donor agencies, the regional efforts represented by the work of the Organization of African Unity, and countries that border those areas of conflict — aimed at achieving progress and development for the individual in Africa, who has and continues to suffer from deprivation, despair, poverty, natural disasters and other man-made catastrophes.

The environment is a gift from God, the Almighty, to man. Its preservation is a collective responsibility which is not limited by political boundaries. This fact has been proven repeatedly. Therefore, wherever man lives, he should do his share to protect the environment and to treat it with wisdom and logic, and be aware of the diverse causes of pollution. We are called upon to commit ourselves constantly to the implementation of Agenda 21 and its principles declared at the Earth Summit. Such actions and principles constitute the foundation upon which a global partnership and a

collective responsibility have been erected. Their goal is to end poverty and hunger and to prevent a decline in health standards and the degradation of environmental systems. All of these are necessary preconditions to obtaining sustainable development, which is the only option open to humanity that guarantees the future of coming generations and offers prosperity and progress to the present ones.

The Sultanate of Oman has prepared a national strategy to protect the environment that aims at achieving balanced and sustainable development, a strategy that would treat economic, social and environmental considerations on an equal footing. My country has also prepared a national plan to combat desertification in the Sultanate in due implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Furthermore, the Sultanate has established an integrated network of natural reserves throughout the country that will accord with the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Sultanate of Oman has supported various environmental bodies, introducing new legislation and updating old environmental laws in order to meet the requirements of environmental protection from the dangers of pollution resulting from diverse development activities with a view to guaranteeing the full implementation of regional and international environmental agreements. It has also declared every 8 January as Omani Day of the Environment.

On the regional level, the Sultanate of Oman, in its efforts to implement the recommendations that stem from the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping Wastes and Other Matter from ships at sea, has declared its intention to build a bunkering port for ships on its shores in preparation for their adoption in other countries of the Gulf region.

On the international level, the Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Preservation, set up by UNESCO, is a true testimony to the effort by the Sultanate of Oman and its leader to translate the concept of collective responsibility for environmental protection into a practical reality. Protecting the environment and striking a balance between the needs of development and the environment form a cornerstone of the declared policy of the Sultanate of Oman. My country looks forward to complementing its effort with that of the international community in the areas of training, transfer of technology and exchange of information and to getting acquainted with the latest modern techniques and scientific discoveries in the environmental field. In this regard, we call on the international community, in particular the developed countries, to provide the necessary financial and technical resources to rescue our planet and its natural resources.

Since the individual is the centre of development and the moving force behind the renaissance of modern Oman and is the real support of all development operations, the Sultanate of Oman, as of the inception of its modern development, has focused its attention on improving the welfare of Omani citizens.

In the social domain, the national plans for the development of the family and of women have been accorded the highest priority. Our social development plans accord special attention to issues relating to the family and to projects that aim at providing the best care for women and children. The efforts of the Government in this regard have culminated in the establishment of women's rehabilitation centres in different parts of the Sultanate. These centres aim to develop women's potential and to promote their cultural and social standing. Moreover, the Government has played its part by introducing new laws and legislation that are geared to achieve social security for the family in cases of old age, disability and handicap, in order to allow those with disabilities to be reintegrated in society and to rehabilitate them for participation in society's development.

The Government has also established development plans for women and children with a view to their preparation for the future through setting up women's organizations based on volunteerism and through launching children's social services in remote and rural areas of the country.

In this regard, we are happy to note that international agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), have praised the efforts of the Government. In its report entitled *The Progress of Nations 1997*, UNICEF illustrated the accomplishments achieved by the Sultanate of Oman in child protection and the country's commitment to ensuring the rights of the child through its accession in 1996 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Sultanate of Oman is the number-one country in the world in terms of reducing infant under-five mortality by 74 per cent between 1980 and 1995. The report notes:

> "The proportion of children who reach their fifth birthday is one of the most fundamental indicators of a country's concern for its people. Child survival statistics are a poignant indicator of the priority given to the services that help a child to

flourish: adequate supplies of nutritious food, the availability of high-quality health care and easy access to safe water and sanitation facilities, as well as the family's overall economic condition and the health and status of women in the community." [See *The Progress of Nations 1997*, page 28]

The UNICEF report for the year 1994 also notes that, based on the 1992 indicators, the Sultanate of Oman ranked as the number-two nation in the Middle East and North Africa region in terms of girls' enrolment in primary education.

Recently, the achievement of modern development in the Sultanate of Oman has culminated in the significant achievement of the introduction of the Basic Law of the State, which is considered a milestone in the Sultanate's modern history. Other serious steps are also under way to strengthen the participation of women in the legislature, the Majlis Al-Shura.

On the economic level, achieving balance and stability in macroeconomics and encouraging private enterprise in a competitive and free environment constitute the future vision that will guide the Omani economy for the next 25 years.

We believe that the reaffirmation of the previously mentioned Basic Law of the State and the adherence to these principles will be the guiding factor in the country's policy of openness that should engender confidence in our economy and create the necessary conditions for investments.

In the area of diversifying the sources of its national revenue, the Sultanate of Oman is in the process of implementing several other major projects that are expected to capitalize on its natural gas discoveries and reserves. In this respect, we would like to note in particular that the liquefied natural gas project should begin operation with the first shipment in the year 2000. Work has also begun on building the container port in Raysút, in the south of the Sultanate, with a view to its becoming a regional and international port. It is our hope that this port will serve as a regional focal point for exporters and transitional trade.

In addition to these efforts, the Omani Government is in the process of implementing various privatization projects through careful study. It is also updating its tax and investment laws in accordance with the new spirit of global partnership prevailing throughout the world.

In accord with this global partnership, the Sultanate of Oman has adopted important measures to implement the necessary requirements for its membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO). It is our fervent hope that these measures will be finalized in order to allow Oman to assume its rightful place in the organization in the near future. Here I would like to recall that, in compliance with the guidelines of the WTO in the area of intellectual property, Oman has completed the formal procedures for becoming a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). In this vein, the Convention signed at Stockholm on 14 July 1967 has been in force in Oman as of 19 February 1997.

On the regional plane, the economic cooperation among the States members of the GCC is being strengthened every day. Moreover, there is agreement among them with regard to international treaties and organizations. The member States of the GCC are seriously striving to join the WTO. Coordination between the GCC and other regional and international economic groupings is something that ought to be noted here as well.

The Sultanate of Oman adheres to a free-market economy and vigorously promotes foreign investments. And in this regard, it has introduced various incentives, created the appropriate environment and enacted flexible legislation in order to eliminate all the barriers and impediments that might stand in the way of attracting foreign investors and protecting their rights.

Based on this conviction, given our national economic strategies and in response to international developments that attest to the importance of economic groupings, the Sultanate of Oman participated in the first Ministerial Meeting for the formal launching of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) which was held in Mauritius in March 1997. As a result of many years' work, in which my country had the honour to initiate and take part in formative meetings, the Indian Ocean Rim Economic Association was officially established. This has paved the way for its members to work together towards strengthening economic and trade cooperation between them in one of the important regions of the world in accordance with the goals and objectives enshrined in the Association's charter. These goals include increasing economic linkages, cooperation and interdependence between the member States and their peoples. Besides working with the private and academic sector, members of the Indian Ocean Rim Economic Association are working towards

establishing stronger ties in the areas of technical and scientific cooperation and also promoting the exchange of investment opportunities and mutual economic benefits.

We welcome the national-level initiatives to set up programmes to pay arrears to the United Nations. The adoption of such measures will revitalize the work of the Organization in all areas, particularly in those areas relating to organization, administration and finance. This should strengthen the performance of the Organization in the years 1998 and 1999 in accordance with the practical framework established by the General Assembly. At the same time, we urge all States to refrain from setting conditions for the United Nations during the payment of their late dues. Such conditions ignore the will and interests of the international community, and are characterized as focusing entirely on short-term national interests of the States involved. Such conditions could lead to the further escalation of old and existing tensions in the world, until appropriate solutions for their radical elimination are found. Here we advocate caution and deliberateness in connection with the elimination of some of the United Nations missions — such as the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, presently stationed in Jerusalem, and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. These cutbacks might have negative political and legal implications.

Through the United Nations the international community has proved its ability to renew its determination and muster the necessary political will for serious collective work and cooperation in fostering international peace and security. In this regard the Organization has shouldered huge responsibilities and faced complex challenges in its efforts to restructure its system for the next millennium through the adoption of less costly and more effective mechanisms for attaining the desired goals.

In our view, after all the debates and deliberations in the General Assembly, the time has now come to have a final vision of how to expand the Security Council and to restructure it, that Council being the most important political body charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. While bearing in mind the global economic and political realities, which cannot be ignored, the reforms should be of a holistic nature, based on equality among nations and equitable geographic distribution. There is also the need to establish democracy in the work and decision-making of the Security Council. The Council's work also encompasses the development of an actual and precise picture of the new international order, which should be characterized by justice, security and peace.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, His Excellency The Honourable Lakshman Kadirgamar, M.P.

Mr. Kadirgamar (Sri Lanka): May I begin, Sir, by extending to you our warm felicitations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly. Your long association with the United Nations as Ukraine's Permanent Representative and your diplomatic skills and accomplishments as your country's Foreign Minister undoubtedly, if I may say so, make you eminently suited for the task of guiding our deliberations this year.

We would like to place on record our deep appreciation for the achievements of your predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia. As President of the General Assembly last year he left an indelible mark in the annals of this institution by giving it bold and vigorous leadership at a time when far-reaching changes in the United Nations system are being undertaken.

I also wish to convey our warm greetings, and indeed a very special welcome, to the Secretary-General as he participates in this, his first General Assembly debate since he became the chief executive of our Organization. He has, in a very short time, developed and launched a far-reaching programme of reforms, which is undoubtedly the most comprehensive undertaken in the 52-year history of the Organization. We pledge our fullest cooperation to him in his arduous work. We pledge to make a positive response to his initiative for reform.

This year the General Assembly is preoccupied — and very rightly so — with the question of reform. It is no doubt an important question, a question on which all delegations have a view. Indeed, there are many conflicting views on the subject. My Government also has a view, one that it shares with a large number of delegations, especially those of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. I will in a moment make my brief observations on the question of reform.

But this year I wish to devote my address to the General Assembly, in the main, to a different theme. I wish to place before the delegations here assembled, fairly and squarely, and to plead fervently, a cause to which my Government is deeply committed and for which it has deep concern. It is a cause that deserves the

strong support of all Governments and all the peoples of the world. It is a cause that challenges the conscience of mankind. It is a cause that cries out for redress, for immediate, concerted, vigorous action. It is the cause of the innocent, helpless victims of war. More specifically, my theme is the impact of armed conflict on children: a subject that in the experience of Sri Lanka is drenched in blood and tears. I will return to my theme in a moment. But first, the question of reform.

Although 1997 is often referred to as the year of reform, we would prefer it to be remembered as the year of renewal and reform. Reform by itself is no substitute for empowering the United Nations. Renewal of the spirit of multilateralism enshrined in the Charter is an essential corollary to the reform exercise launched by the Secretary-General. If reform is to be conceptually sound and capable of effective implementation, it must command in the fullest sense consensus in the General Assembly.

Sri Lanka certainly shares the vision of the Secretary-General to make the United Nations a dynamic and cost-effective institution responsive to the challenges of our day and age. We recognize the necessity for reorganizing the Secretariat, the consolidation of United Nations activities into core areas, the creation of a senior management group, and the coordination of United Nations field activities as a manifestation of sound principles of good management. The creation of a United Nations Development Group that would consolidate and coordinate the activities of a variety of bodies is another proposal that merits close attention. We endorse the measures to strengthen the United Nations operational capacity to combat drugs, crime and terrorism by bringing together disparate international efforts under a single dedicated organization.

Sri Lanka shares with many other delegations the disappointment that consensus has so far eluded our efforts to expand the Security Council. The General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on this issue has been deliberating since 1994 with very little progress accomplished, which is itself evidence of the contentious nature of the question. Sri Lanka was one of the 10 countries that brought the question of equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council to the General Assembly agenda in 1979. Many Member States have consistently demanded that the composition of the Security Council should be broadened and that its working methods should be rendered transparent. The Council cannot remain structurally fossilized and anachronistic in a world of dynamic change.

We are pleased to note that the need for change is now being widely recognized. In order to be credible, viable and successful, reform of the Security Council should prudently take into account the interests clearly set forth by the non-aligned nations. We are pleased to note that the United States of America has now agreed that an expanded Security Council should contain three representatives of the developing countries as permanent members.

We agree with the Secretary-General's proposal that there should be a dedicated locus for the United Nations operational activities against crime and terrorism. United Nations action against terrorism can no longer be confined to rhetorical statements and exhortations. We therefore endorse the Secretary- General's timely proposal to place United Nations action to combat crime and terrorism in an operational mode.

There is convincing evidence that civil society and the rule of law are increasingly threatened by transnational networking in illicit arms, terrorism, narcotics, money-laundering and crime. The former Secretary-General rightly described this phenomenon as a "supra-national subversive threat" to peace and stability. The present Secretary-General has correctly focused on the fact that underworld groups and terrorists have mastered the abuse of technology and the globalized information network to propagate their sinister designs. Their misuse and abuse of modern technology have vastly increased the power and influence of these criminal groups, which pose a massive threat to law and order, democratic political institutions and economic activities within and between nations.

It should be a priority on the international agenda that effective measures be taken to control, if not eliminate, these pernicious elements. We agree with the recommendation that a redoubling of efforts involving new partnerships among national and international agencies will be needed to achieve this objective. It is to be emphasized that there should be coordination between the merged focal points on crime, drugs and terrorism and the United Nations department handling the flow of small arms and the illicit arms trade.

We also hope that the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on an International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings, of which Sri Lanka is a Vice-Chairman, will conclude its negotiations and submit a text for adoption at this session. Thereafter, we urge the international community, especially the large and

powerful nations, to update their domestic legislation so as to arm themselves with adequate legislative authority to eradicate the fund-raising and other activities which take place on their soil in support of terrorist activities that take place on the soil of other States. Today terrorism is a phenomenon with international ramifications. Only well-organized, well-coordinated international action can combat international terrorism effectively.

I turn now to the question of human rights. The delicate and complex process of protecting and promoting human rights, good governance and accountability in an environment of underdevelopment, violence and terrorism is one that should be carefully developed and resolutely moved forward. The Declaration of Human Rights is universal and unalterable. Sri Lanka does not believe that the Declaration should be diluted, modified or ignored. What we believe, and strongly advocate, is that international action to enforce human rights should be fair and even-handed. Human rights should never be used by powerful States to bludgeon and bully weaker States for spurious political reasons. The essence of peace and development is that each human being should be enabled to enjoy "better standards of life in larger freedom".

Undeterred by the extraordinary security problems posed by terrorism and the threats levelled against the democratic traditions and institutions of Sri Lanka, we have been able to make much headway in the promotion and protection of human rights in our country. Sri Lanka is now a party to 13 international human rights instruments. At the risk of exposing itself to tendentious propaganda by terrorist groups, the Government has taken a number of national and international measures on a broad front, to pursue an open policy on human rights in accordance with international norms. We have established a national Human Rights Commission, which is an independent organization with investigative, monitoring and advisory powers. The Commission is now functional and is in touch with regional and international institutions including the United Nations Centre for Human Rights.

I am also pleased to mention that I have today, just a short while ago, deposited with the Secretary-General Sri Lanka's instrument of accession to the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. This important decision to permit international scrutiny of governmental actions affecting the human rights of our citizens is consistent with our policy of openness on human rights.

Sri Lanka warmly welcomes the appointment of Mary Robinson as the new High Commissioner for Human Rights. I had the pleasure of discussing human rights issues with her a few days ago. I am confident that she will bring to her task an open mind and a fair approach; that she will seek and promote informed dialogue, not confrontation; that she will strive to win the trust of developing countries; and that she will not apply double standards nor wield human rights concerns as a weapon against them. We wish her every success as she assumes her important duties. She may rest assured that she will receive from Sri Lanka the fullest cooperation.

I have now reached the central theme of my address: the impact of armed conflict on children. Every year the United Nations builds a mountain of paper: according to the British Foreign Secretary, 2,500 tons of paper are produced annually at a cost of $150 million. At this time of year, every year, the General Assembly is engulfed by a flood of words that rises to new heights as the membership of our Organization grows in number. There is much waste, much repetition, much verbiage in our methods of work. But we must always remember that within this pile of papers there are some documents which deserve — which require — the closest attention of the international community.

One such document, outstanding for its sweep, its depth and the careful research that went into its preparation is the study on the impact of armed conflict on children compiled by Ms. Graça Machel and her collaborators and submitted to the General Assembly last year under the symbols A/51/306 and A/51/306/Add.1. It is a document so profound in its impact, so searing in the revelations it makes of matters that the world little understands that to ignore it would be a permanent rebuke to the collective conscience of mankind.

The study exposes the plight of children as the victims of armed conflict. It covers the agonizing situation of children as refugees, as objects of exploitation and gender-based violence and above all as child soldiers. The study recommends measures for the rehabilitation and reconciliation of children affected by war, for promoting their psychological recovery and social integration, for their education and for dealing with a number of other questions relevant to the problem of mitigating the impact of war on children. The study points out that millions of children are caught up in conflicts in which they are not merely bystanders but targets. Some fall victim to a general onslaught against civilians; others die as part of a calculated genocide. Still

other children suffer the effects of sexual violence or the multiple deprivations of armed conflict that expose them to hunger or disease. Just as shocking, thousands of young children are cynically exploited as combatants.

In 1995, according to the study, 30 major conflicts raged in different locations around the world. All of them took place within States, between factions split along ethnic, religious or cultural lines. The conflict destroyed crops, places of worship and schools. Nothing was spared, held sacred or protected: not children, not families, not communities. In the past decade, an estimated two million children have been killed in armed conflict. Three times as many have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. Countless others have been forced to witness or even take part in horrifying acts of violence. These statistics are shocking enough, but more chilling, says the study, is the conclusion to be drawn from them: that more and more of the world is being sucked into a desolate moral vacuum. This is a space devoid of the most basic human values; a space in which children are slaughtered, raped and maimed; a space in which children are exploited as soldiers; a space in which children are starved and exposed to extreme brutality. Unregulated terror and violence speak of deliberate victimization. There are few further depths to which humanity could sink.

Ms. Machel pleads that whatever the causes of modern-day brutalities towards children, the time has come to call a halt. I make the same plea to the General Assembly today. The study exposes the extent of the problem and proposes many practical ways to pull back from the brink. Its most fundamental demand is that children simply have no part in warfare. The international community must denounce this attack on children for what it is: intolerable and unacceptable.

Violent conflict has always made victims of non-combatants. The patterns and characteristics of contemporary armed conflicts, however, have increased the risks for children. The personalization of power and leadership and the manipulation of ethnicity and religion to serve personal or narrow group interests have had similarly debilitating effects on countries in conflict. Armed conflicts across and between communities result in massive levels of destruction: physical, human, moral, cultural. Not only are large numbers of children killed and injured, but countless others grow up deprived of their material and emotional needs, including the structures that give meaning to social and cultural life. The entire fabric of their societies — their homes, schools, health systems and religious institutions — are torn to pieces.

The Machel study rightly points out that war violates every right of a child: the right to life, the right to be with family and community, the right to health, the right to the development of the personality and the right to be nurtured and protected. Many of today's conflicts last the whole length of a childhood, meaning that from birth to early adulthood, many children will experience multiple and cumulative assaults.

Against the background I have outlined, I wish to focus sharply on the terrible plight of child soldiers. The Machel study has pointed out that one of the most alarming trends in armed conflict is the participation of children as soldiers. Children serve armies in supporting roles, as cooks, porters, messengers and spies. Increasingly, however, adults are deliberately conscripting children as soldiers. Some commanders have even noted the desirability of using child soldiers in war because they are

> "'more obedient, do not question orders and are easier to manipulate than adult soldiers'". [A/51/306, para. 34]

A series of 24 case studies on the use of children as soldiers prepared for the Machel study, covering conflicts over the past 30 years, indicates that Government or rebel armies around the world have recruited tens of thousands of children. Many child soldiers are 10 years of age or younger. While the majority are boys, girls also are recruited. The children most likely to become soldiers are those from impoverished and marginalized backgrounds and those who have become separated from their families.

In Sri Lanka we know exactly what the Machel study is talking about. We have for almost two decades been in the grip of a war being fought against the State by a group of heavily armed terrorists known as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and internationally known as one of the deadliest terrorist organizations the world has ever seen. It is fighting to create a separate State in Sri Lanka by force of arms. Last July the Senate of the United States unanimously concluded that the LTTE is a terrorist organization and requested the State Department to declare it to be so. Last August a Canadian court declared the LTTE to be a terrorist organization and ordered the deportation of its chief fund-raiser in Canada.

The LTTE has killed thousands of unarmed civilians and has destroyed public property worth millions of

dollars. In January last year it bombed and destroyed the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, killing hundreds of civilians, and in July last year it bombed a rush-hour commuter train full of workers going home, again killing hundreds of civilians. These are but a few of the atrocities the LTTE has committed against civilians in the course of a long campaign of terror. Only a few months ago it killed two of our Members of Parliament, adding to the large tally of politicians and other leaders murdered by the LTTE over the years, including a President of Sri Lanka and a Prime Minister of India. Recently the LTTE attacked international civilian shipping that provides essential services and supplies to the Tamil community in the north of Sri Lanka, the very community on whose behalf it claims to be fighting.

The LTTE has conscripted thousands of teenage children to fight its war. Involving children as soldiers has been made easier by the proliferation of inexpensive light weapons. But the LTTE is committing more dastardly and more heinous crimes against Tamil children. It brazenly kidnaps them or lures them to its cause by glorifying and romanticizing war. They are brainwashed into believing in the cult of martyrdom. They swear fanatical allegiance to the leader. The Machel study identified Sri Lanka as one of the countries where children are being lured into "cults of martyrdom" [A/51/306, para. 43] by the "ideological indoctrination" [ibid.] of the LTTE. A book entitled *Children, the Invisible Soldiers*, released by the Save the Children organization in Stockholm, has condemned the use of children in suicide attacks by the LTTE. The international news agency IPS reported last May that

> "as adults are killed, up to half the fighters of the LTTE are children, many among them girls".

In another recent study, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women has strongly condemned the use of women in war by the LTTE.

Many of these children, boys and girls, are no more than 10 years of age. Many of them are transformed into suicide bombers. They wear cyanide capsules around their necks. They are hurled into battle as human bombs. The Machel study itself has observed, with specific reference to Sri Lanka, that

> "adults have used young people's immaturity to their own advantage, recruiting and training adolescents for suicide bombings." [ibid.]

A recent press report on fighting in the north of Sri Lanka noted that

> "young boys barely in their teens are blindfolded and escorted by a woman Tiger cadre to the battlefield, in groups of eight to 10, their blindfolds removed and they are ordered to fire at troops".

In December 1995 the former United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) representative in Sri Lanka said in a press release

> "The LTTE recruits boys and girls from the age of 10 upwards. Their dependence on child combatants is increasing rapidly."

The Machel study has referred to the role which international organizations, non-governmental organizations, religious groups and civil society in general can play in preventing this diabolical practice. It is indeed a matter of great regret that in my own country, despite the notorious prevalence of the LTTE practice of recruiting children as fighters, these organizations, which are often quite vocal in their pleas for peace and swift to castigate excesses on the part of the armed forces, have remained strangely silent on this issue. By their failure to condemn such acts, they are surely guilty of a grave dereliction of the duty to uphold the moral and spiritual values of a civilized society. By their silence it would appear that they are oblivious to the immense tragedy of a whole generation of young lives being sacrificed to Moloch, while a misguided few applaud the helpless victims as martyrs, and yet others seek to romanticize the so-called liberation of girls who have hitherto been brought up in a long-respected traditional mode, caring nought for the dehumanization that is involved.

I strongly urge the international community to take action on the lines suggested in paragraph 62 of the Machel study. These recommendations envisage a global campaign aimed at eradicating the use of children under the age of 18 years in armed conflict and the public exposure of such practices by the media, creating international pressure against those who resort to them. I also urge strict adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child by all actors in armed conflicts, and I stress the need for specific measures to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers into society and the need for early action to conclude the drafting of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in regard to the involvement of children in armed conflicts

and the prohibition of recruitment of children under the age of 18.

We reject the complacent assumption made by some that the involvement of children in armed conflict is inevitable and unavoidable. This is clearly not the case. Their participation is the result of heartless, deliberate and calculated decisions made by ruthless men, regardless of the loss of innocent lives, relentlessly pursuing their megalomaniac ambitions. The leader of the LTTE, while sending to their deaths thousands of young children — the youngest of the young — brings up his own children in comfort and safety, far from the battlefields, far away from the country itself. This barbaric practice of conscripting or luring children for war must be condemned by all civilized States, without any room for equivocation or doubt, and must be eliminated from our world if we are to preserve our humanity.

I appeal to the affluent countries in which the LTTE has established offices and raises funds to prosecute its infamous war in Sri Lanka not to tolerate its presence or give it shelter when it engages in the commission of dastardly crimes against children — indeed, the children of its own community.

On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, I greatly welcome the appointment of a distinguished Ugandan diplomat, Mr. Olara Otunnu, as the Secretary-General's Special Representative to study the impact of armed conflict on children. His appointment has also been welcomed by Canada. The Canadian Foreign Minister also referred to and condemned the recruitment of children as soldiers. We must give our wholehearted support to Mr. Otunnu. He intends to propose and initiate concrete measures to tackle the problem. He will launch a campaign of public advocacy to bring to the notice of the world the terrible plight of children in war. I appeal to the international community not to allow his work to suffer for lack of funds.

As we look back at the half century that has elapsed since the founding of the United Nations, we have, in truth, to acknowledge a sense of satisfaction at what has been achieved, however limited in scope, through our collective decisions and actions during that period. There have been undeniable gains in the spheres of economic and social development, however modest they appear to be when measured against our aspirations and objectives. Yet the fundamental problems of the developing world remain unresolved, while the developed countries have gone from strength to strength.

In the sphere of collective security and the maintenance of world peace, although major catastrophes have been averted, the United Nations has not succeeded in making real the dream of every human being to live in peace in a world free from the pestilence of war and all the attendant horrors of human carnage and the senseless destruction of everything we hold dear. Even the end of the cold war has made no great difference to countries such as ours embroiled in internal civil conflicts, all too often nourished by the giant armament manufacturers of the world, while the United Nations endlessly debates disarmament.

However deep our sense of disappointment and disenchantment may be, have we any hope apart from the United Nations? I do not think we have. If the United Nations has fallen short of our expectations, it is because we, the Member States, have failed to honour our obligations and fulfil our responsibilities to the world community, selfishly placing our national interests above the common good.

If we continue in this fashion the United Nations will cease to be relevant altogether, and history will surely record it as yet another pious venture which we did not have the courage and commitment to make real.

As the German Foreign Minister said from this podium a few days ago,

> "it is on our children, the weakest members of any society ... that the world's future and hopes depend ... They are little people who need big rights. How much worse off would they be if there were no United Nations? What would become of the world's conscience? Who would demand consideration for and solidarity with such children if we allowed this Organization to decline?" [See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-Second Session, Plenary Meetings*, 9th Meeting]

In order to realize the ideals of the founders of this world body, and the hopes and dreams of countless millions of people who look to the United Nations for their realization, we need to renew our faith and trust in the United Nations — not in the old United Nations, which is looked upon with cynicism, even suspicion, but in a United Nations that will, in a sense, be a new creation and a new being. But for the United Nations to be born anew we need to bring about fundamental structural changes in the international order, changes that will give it new life and strength for the coming century.

These changes will entail sacrifice; they will be changes which many States will hesitate to welcome and be reluctant to accept lest they endanger their sovereignty and their so-called vital interests. Nevertheless, such change will be in the nature of an uncompromising demand that will confront us all. Nothing worthwhile can be achieved without sacrifice. That is indeed a universal truth concerning human redemption, and the United Nations is, after all, like any other human institution. Its weaknesses and strengths are those of humankind.

The obligation to act in the common interest cannot be undertaken selectively; nor does the assumption of this onerous duty admit of any double standard. All the nations of the world, the powerful and the weak, the rich and the poor, must jointly agree to curtail their independence and their claims to act unilaterally. Each must agree to subordinate its individual decision and discretion to a global political will, manifested through truly democratic and representative organs of the United Nations, reflecting the authentic judgement of the world community of States. Apart from, or bereft of, the collective decisions and concerted acts of such a reformed and restructured United Nations, carried into effect resolutely and with determination, I doubt whether we can honestly expect a better future for humankind in the new millennium. We must not fail the United Nations, or else we shall assuredly go down in history as "the hollow men" of the twentieth century.

Programme of work

The President in the Chair.

The President: I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/INF/52/3, which contains a tentative programme of work and schedule of plenary meetings for the month of October and which is now being distributed in the Hall.

I should like to point out that this schedule was prepared to facilitate the organization of the work of delegations and to help ensure that the relevant documentation is ready for the discussion of the respective items. The lists of speakers for all the items listed in document A/INF/52/3 are now open.

I will, in due course, announce the dates for the consideration of other agenda items, as well as keep the Assembly informed of any additions or changes.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, His Excellency Mr. Seyoum Mesfin.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): I wish first of all to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. There is no doubt that your election to this high position is an acknowledgment of your personal competence and of the commitment of your country, Ukraine, to the United Nations and to the principles enshrined in its Charter.

I also wish to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Razali, who discharged his responsibilities with great wisdom and dedication.

Our appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for the great efforts he is making to ensure the revitalization of the United Nations. In his report (A/51/950) to the Assembly entitled "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform", the Secretary-General has proposed measures that Member States may take to democratize the United Nations and to enhance its effectiveness as an instrument with which to deal with the challenges facing us as we enter the twenty-first century. I wish to assure the Secretary-General of Ethiopia's full support for his initiative.

Ethiopia strongly believes that the reform and expansion of the Security Council, which is long overdue, is at the heart of the United Nations reform process. Broad consensus has been established that the reform and expansion of the Council must reflect the realities of the world we live in today. The African position on the issue was articulated at the thirty-third Summit of the Heads of State or Government of the member States of the Organization of African Unity, held in Harare in June this year. Ethiopia fully supports the African position.

This annual occasion affords us the opportunity to reiterate our commitment to the United Nations, to what it represents and to all efforts designed to address our common challenges.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam), Vice-President, took the Chair.

For obvious reasons, some of the common dangers we have faced have receded. The cold war, which by common consensus represented a threat to the very

survival of humanity, is more or less behind us. There should therefore be far greater opportunity today for effective international cooperation in many spheres, and especially for real and tangible steps towards the realization of genuine partnership in the fight against poverty and to enable those determined to remove the obstacles to their development to achieve their goals and fulfil the dreams and the hopes of their peoples.

Peace and security can hardly be made durable and sustainable when conditions faced by the majority of peoples in the developing countries generate hopelessness and when deprivations suffered today are made all the more painful because existing trends, instead of providing consolation, promise more of the same, or worse. There is no more appropriate time than now, when we are preparing to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to renew our commitment and to rededicate ourselves to the realization of full respect of human rights in all their dimensions — civil, political, economic and social rights, including the right to development and to be free from the shackles of poverty.

For Ethiopia, the eradication of poverty and the promotion of human rights are the cornerstones of the country's development strategies and democratic reforms. In the immediate human rights programme, the Federal Parliament plans to establish, as stipulated in the Ethiopian Federal Constitution, a national human rights commission and an ombudsman early next year.

I wish to take this opportunity to bring to the attention of this Assembly the fact that leading members of the repressive military regime that ruled Ethiopia in the 1970s and 1980s are being tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity. These public trials are the biggest since Nuremberg. However, Ethiopian courts have been denied the opportunity to bring to justice all the perpetrators of these crimes because many of those who should be tried in Ethiopia are given safe haven in other countries, in contravention of the provisions of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. We call on the States concerned to cooperate with Ethiopia and to take appropriate measures, in accordance with international humanitarian law, to ensure that those who are responsible for crimes against humanity are brought to justice.

International cooperation and the benefits that are drawn from it, whether through bilateral or multilateral means, cannot be a substitute for what individual countries must do to ensure that sustainable development is achieved and economic growth is realized. The responsibility to extricate our countries from the miseries of poverty, in the case of those of us to whom this applies, lies with us. Aid alone, whatever its nature or quantity, would not do, even if it were to be made available.

But it is critically important that the international economic environment evolve towards providing an even and level playing field, most particularly for those who, for various reasons — whether on account of their own mistakes or because of complex historical reasons, some of which are not of their own making — have stayed behind and have failed to put their countries on a track of sustainable development.

In this regard, we cannot but admit that not enough is being done, although much is said and promised. The old divisions might have been consigned irrevocably to the past, but we cannot pretend that, though we continue to talk about our common humanity and the common village we occupy, the other divisions in the world are being addressed, let alone bridged. It would suffice just to look at the situation of poverty in the world today and the lukewarm effort to combat and to eradicate it internationally. The prediction that the level of poverty will continue to grow in Africa is a challenge to the international community, as it is a reflection of the dire condition of the continent.

The need to ensure food security for all should by no means be an impossible task to achieve for the world we live in. Here as well, individual countries facing this problem have to assume their responsibility in the first instance, but the international community should also have a role to play, including in the fight against corruption — a disease which, as we all realize, has an international aspect in its grand dimension, and is therefore not amenable to solutions taken at the national level alone. We in Ethiopia have made important progress over the last few years in building the basis for food security for our peoples. But, as should be obvious, no guarantee can be secured on food security as long as production is totally dependent, as is the case in Ethiopia, on rain-fed agriculture and when for a variety of reasons the available water is not utilized for irrigation purposes.

It is in this connection that the equitable utilization of transboundary rivers becomes an issue that should be accorded the utmost urgency. Regional cooperation on international rivers will remain impossible if calculations based on a zero-sum outcome favouring one side or another govern the attitude of parties that could otherwise

objectively benefit from even-handed cooperation. With respect to the question of the Nile waters, which affects Ethiopia directly and regarding which there has been no effective cooperation among the riparians, we wish to call on those involved to commit themselves to real and genuine regional cooperation which is based on a win-win perspective, ensuring outcomes that are fair, equitable and just. A status quo which is unjust cannot endure; nor can it serve as a basis for building genuine cooperation.

We are fully aware that at the level of the United Nations, there have been a number of initiatives designed to help address the economic and social problems faced by developing countries and to mitigate the effects of poverty and the impact of those conditions hindering the realization of sustainable economic development. However, despite good intentions, their practical implementation has always been half-hearted and, at best, less than satisfactory and therefore a source of disappointment. This applies to the United Nations Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, to the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) and to other initiatives. It is our hope that the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa will not meet a similar fate.

This should not be regarded as criticism aimed at the United Nations. The Organization has no life and no activity of its own independent of Member States. It is we Member States that have not sufficiently seized the opportunity opened up by the end of the cold-war division of the world and the international tension engendered by that state of affairs.

Not only within the United Nations but in general, both in the bilateral and the multilateral areas, the international cooperation being made available to the developing world today is not commensurate with the challenges faced by those countries, nor does it do justice to the tremendous effort made by those countries, including many in Africa, to make their economies business-friendly.

A growing number of countries on our continent, including my own country, Ethiopia, have taken decisive measures to liberalize their economies, to cut Government spending, to institute sound macroeconomic policies and to enhance the role of the private sector and civil society. Because of these serious efforts at belt-tightening and monetary and fiscal discipline, there have been some encouraging developments over the past four years with regard to economic growth in a number of African countries, including Ethiopia. In my own country, for the first time in more than two decades, the economy has begun to grow, with a growth rate of over 10 per cent in gross domestic product having been achieved in 1996. The average rate of growth over the past five years has been over 7 per cent.

In the area of governance and democratization, there is little doubt that, despite some setbacks, we in Africa seem to have made substantial progress over the past seven or so years. These gains need to be consolidated and enriched at a pace that can realistically be sustained, in conformity with the principles of indigenous ownership.

On the other hand, it would be stating the obvious to say that our economies have been slated to go on operating in an international economic environment that is hardly friendly to growth and sustainable development. The obstacles are diverse, and they are the same ones as we have been reiterating in gatherings such as this and whenever other opportunities have presented themselves. The challenges we face involve market opportunities for our commodities, and they are also related to protectionism, unfavourable terms of trade and the difficulty associated with attracting a sufficient level of foreign direct investment. But most of all the challenges we face involve issues related to the debt overhang and to debt-servicing obligations. If there is one major impediment to the development of countries such as Ethiopia, that impediment must be identified as the debt overhang, which continues to necessitate the diversion of so many resources from productive activities that could otherwise have accelerated growth and development.

We cannot, of course, be oblivious to the many proposals for debt relief and to the number of positive, albeit inadequate, steps that have been taken in this regard. We recognize and appreciate the efforts made by the Group of 7, the latest being the steps taken and the promises made at the Lyon Summit and since most particularly the promise made in connection with debt-relief measures for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt.

But even then, we cannot ignore the irony and the paradox we encounter with respect to debt relief. More often than not, to qualify for some of these debt-relief measures countries are expected to fulfil and meet conditions that are not absorbable even by economies that are far more advanced.

There is little doubt that one of the key prerequisites for sustainable economic development is ownership of one's economic programme. However, the conditionalities that accompany debt- relief measures have been undermining ownership, thereby causing the loss of possibilities of adopting policies based on a realistic and appropriate assessment of local and specific conditions. Thus, those condemned to a huge debt overhang which has become unbearable are faced with a Hobson's choice: debt relief with renunciation of ownership, or ownership with no relief.

What we need in this day and age are genuine partnership and international cooperation based at least on commitments to a level playing field and to conditions that do not require those in the developing world to face impossible choices. We are indeed hopeful that some of the latest initiatives that countries are in the process of taking bilaterally and the emerging trends encouraging renewed focus on Africa, such as the ministerial-level meeting of the Security Council convened last week, will help to increase the international community's sensitivity to the development challenges of Africa.

Genuine partnership is required to make sustainable development a reality in Africa. We hope that the Secretary-General next his report to the Security Council and the General Assembly next February, will forward concrete recommendations that would spare us a repetition of past disappointments.

It may not always be appropriate to see an immediate causal link between poverty and lack of economic development, on the one hand, and conflict and lack of security, including terrorism, on the other. But there is little doubt that the despair, hopelessness and malaise engendered by poverty and economic and social difficulties provide the fuel for ensuring the degeneration into all-out fratricidal war of political frictions, whatever their sources, with consequent social breakdown and the implosion of societies. We have seen too many times that once societies have imploded and State institutions have disintegrated, picking up the pieces becomes extremely difficult and a nearly impossible task. Look at Somalia.

But even so, Africa has made some progress. The nightmare in Liberia is over, thanks to the immense sacrifices made by the members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). New hope is also generated by the demise of the Mobutu regime and by the entry onto the scene of the Democratic Republic of Congo, whose Government and people need the support and the solidarity of the international community and of the United Nations. Despite some setbacks in Burundi, the countries of the region and the facilitator, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, continue to persevere in their efforts to help bring about a resolution of the conflict in that country.

We are pleased and encouraged that the effort being made by Mr. James Baker in Western Sahara is showing some important progress, and we are hopeful that the day may not be too far off when it will be possible to hold a free and fair referendum in Western Sahara. I wish to associate myself with the Secretary- General in congratulating the parties to the conflict on the positive results they have achieved so far towards finding a durable solution to the conflict. In the same spirit, I would like to call on them to continue direct dialogue and to speed up the implementation of their agreements.

With respect to the situation in the Middle East, we are profoundly disappointed with the increasing complications that the peace process has encountered. It is our ardent hope that the confidence which had emerged earlier will be rekindled and that the troubled region will find durable peace on the basis of justice for those to whom it has been denied and security for all.

Apart from the conflict in southern Sudan, regarding which the member States of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) have continued to provide their assistance for the peaceful resolution of the problem and the reversals of the gains in Sierra Leone and the Comoros, the major conflict in Africa which has remained intractable is the one the people of Somalia are facing. Here too, important progress has been made and the opportunities for making a real breakthrough have been created which the Somalis can ill afford to squander. The framework for such a breakthrough has been made possible by the creation of the National Salvation Council, which is now preparing to hold a national reconciliation conference soon.

We all recall how many resources were spent by the United Nations for peace in Somalia. Now, with a small fraction of the resources and the efforts deployed earlier by the United Nations, the international community can position itself to assist the realization of national reconciliation and peace in that war-torn country. The process of peacemaking in Somalia is at a very critical juncture. The international community and the United Nations should not keep their distance from the effort for peace in Somalia.

The IGAD countries are determined to see to it that this process succeeds. The support of the Organization of African Unity and of our partners has been indispensable in this exercise, particularly in connection with the effort to ensure that those like Mr. Hussein Aideed are brought on board the peace process. It is our firm view that no one should be allowed to preempt and scuttle this process, and the unequivocal support of the United Nations for the ongoing peace process spearheaded by IGAD is indeed critical at this stage.

We all recall how the proliferation of initiatives for peace in Somalia created complications in the past and how, as a result, it was difficult for the international community to speak with one voice for peace in that country. There is today a much improved situation which, however, needs to be maintained and consolidated, for which close coordination between the United Nations, OAU and the IGAD countries is an absolute necessity.

Since the countries of the region have been made by proximity to see no luxury in the continuing lack of central authority in that country, they have chosen to work on the basis of the maxim that a less than good Government is better than none at all in Somalia. The consequence of the absence of central authority in Somalia has been the growth of forces, including from outside the region, bent on ensuring that chaos is continued and even expanded in the country and in the region — all the more reason, therefore, for the United Nations and the international community to do more to help the countries of the region and IGAD succeed in the effort they are making for peace and national reconciliation in Somalia.

In this regard, I wish to pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the steps he has taken to revitalize the United Nations role in Somalia and for the initiative he has taken to find ways of maximizing the support of the international community and of the United Nations for the ongoing peace process in Somalia. It is our hope that the steps that will be taken on the basis of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's Envoy will ensure greater support of the international community for the IGAD peace initiative and bring about a more effective coordination between the external actors. We strongly believe that the Secretary-General's proposed trust fund for Somalia will go a long way towards providing support to the peace process.

In this connection, I wish also to mention the OAU/IGAD joint mission to Somalia scheduled to take place this month. The explicit aim of this joint mission is to make the Bossaso Reconciliation Conference comprehensive and all-inclusive by encouraging all parties to participate and to convey a clear and unequivocal message that no group has the veto power over peace in Somalia.

Our subregion, the Horn of Africa, has been one of the regions of the world most affected by the consequences of war. The damage inflicted has been immense. Our region needs a respite and a peaceful period to make up for the lost time. Because it is a region in which deadly and prolonged wars were conducted, weapons are easily available and landmines strewn all over the place. In Ethiopia alone, it is estimated that there are over 1.5 million anti-personnel landmines, which continue to kill and maim innocent people, including women and children. In this connection, we attach great importance to the adoption by the recent Oslo Conference of the draft treaty on the ban on anti-personnel landmines. We appeal to those who remain outside the Ottawa process to sign the draft convention in December this year, so that it can be an effective instrument for getting rid of these deadly weapons.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, Ethiopia has always been unreserved in fulfilling its commitment to the Organization and in upholding the principles of its Charter. My country has also been a beneficiary of various programmes of the United Nations system. Accordingly, the increasing effectiveness of the Organization in all areas and the realization of universal peace and security are goals we cherish deeply.

I wish to conclude by expressing the hope that the United Nations and the international community will not miss the opportunities that have been created since the beginning of this decade for fostering effective international cooperation, eradicating poverty and realizing sustainable development in those regions of the world that have not yet achieved it.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, His Excellency the Honourable Alexander Downer.

Mr. Downer (Australia): Let me begin by congratulating Mr. Udovenko on his election as President of the General Assembly at this fifty-second session. The country and the Group he represents have seen great changes in the last decade. It therefore seems particularly

fitting that he is presiding over a General Assembly which will lay the foundation for significant changes to the United Nations itself — changes which must equip it better for the new and potentially more cooperative international environment in which we find ourselves.

It is thus not only right but necessary that reform is the major theme of the United Nations at present, and of this General Assembly in particular. We would like to thank the former President of the Assembly, Ambassador Razali, for the outstanding contribution he made to pursuing the reform agenda during his presidency, notably in his capacity as Chairman of the General Assembly Working Groups.

Today I want to concentrate on three issues in particular: reform of the United Nations; reorienting our approach to human rights so as to promote cooperation and institution building, creating durable structures to give substance to the goals set out in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments; and reconfiguring the traditional United Nations groups better to reflect the regional groupings of the contemporary world.

In dealing with reform, my purpose is to build a world for the next generation, and I am inspired by the hope and aspirations of the next generation.

In that context, I am pleased that we are joined in the General Assembly today by Mr. Perry Cross, a distinguished and courageous young Australian who is leading the fight against paralysis. He exemplifies the Australian belief that individuals with a will and a practical focus can make a difference in fighting barriers and reforming structures which are representative of an earlier era.

Australia wants to work with you, Sir, and with the Secretary-General and all Members of the United Nations, to ensure that by the end of this session of the General Assembly further, substantive progress has been made in the three critical areas of reform: financial reform and resolution of the crisis surrounding the United Nations budget and scale of assessments; reform of the Security Council; and reform of the Organization.

When I made my first statement to the Assembly last year, I stressed the need to move ahead urgently with reform and the reinvigoration of this important Organization, to ensure its future effectiveness and relevance. This year reform has been given real impetus by the new Secretary-General, whose appointment Australia warmly welcomed. Both in March and in July this year he announced significant organizational reforms aimed at the renewal of this body. I have enthusiastically supported these initiatives. We must now build on them.

We share the Secretary-General's conclusions about the shortcomings of the United Nations. The Organization's mission, as enshrined in the Charter, has been repeatedly reaffirmed and remains valid today. But the machinery and the working methods to pursue that mission need thorough review and revision. We agree that there is too much fragmentation of structures, too much rigidity within bodies and too much emphasis on bureaucracy and process.

I would like to highlight in particular the reforms suggested to the United Nations structure and to the Secretariat. The integration of 12 secretariats and entities into 5, and the proposed consolidation of five intergovernmental bodies into two are particularly welcome. They will help streamline and remove unnecessary bureaucratic structure and duplication from the Secretariat. It is an approach we commend also to the specialized agencies as Member nations seek to streamline and even merge some of these bodies.

Important steps are proposed in reforming the way the Secretariat works. We applaud the removal of 1,000 staff posts and the cutting of administrative costs by one third to which the Secretary-General has committed himself. We also wish to see all Secretariat staff move to fixed-term, renewable contracts to allow for greater employment flexibility in the Organization. We support the introduction of a merit-based promotion system and performance appraisal in the place of a system where seniority plays a disproportionate role. We also encourage management to improve training opportunities for junior as well as senior staff.

These reforms will not only make the United Nations work better, but also provide real savings. These savings will be available for programmes, programmes which benefit all of us, but especially support the developing Members of the United Nations. Thus it is a package which is in the interests of all, and deserves support from all. We believe the Assembly needs to provide broad endorsement of the package as a whole early in this session to allow the reform process to proceed, even if some details are negotiated subsequently.

But I acknowledge that for reform to succeed and for the United Nations to carry out its mandate adequate resources must be made available to run the Organization. Australia continues to meet all its financial obligations in full and on time and without conditions, and seeks the same commitment from all our fellow Members. We continue to believe that the negotiation of financial reforms would be facilitated by early settlement of all unpaid contributions. The adoption of a responsible negative- growth budget and a new scale of assessments which accurately reflects relative shares of national income and thus the principle of capacity to pay will also be key issues at this year's session. It is important that the result ensures the burden of supporting the Organization falls fairly on Member States.

Australia remains committed to an expanded, more representative and transparent Security Council, better able to tackle the challenges of the twenty-first century. It should include as permanent members important Powers able to make a major contribution to international peace and security, particularly at this time Japan and Germany. It should also include permanent seats for under-represented regions as well as additional non-permanent seats.

Middle Powers such as Australia have made a significant contribution to the United Nations since its foundation, notably in disarmament, development, peacekeeping and human rights. We are concerned that the interests of small and medium-sized countries not be forgotten in this exercise. In this context, and because of our long-standing historical concerns about the veto, we would like to see an expansion of the Council accompanied by a new understanding on the application of the veto. We would also support a review of any new arrangements after 10 years so that countries like Australia and all other members of the international community have a further opportunity to examine the size, composition and working methods of the Council.

I am optimistic about what can be achieved by the United Nations if we can bring about some essential reforms which would make the Organization function more efficiently and effectively. Let me mention one of the areas in which the United Nations has proven it can function effectively: as a forum and catalyst for international arms control and disarmament efforts.

In recent years we have witnessed several landmark developments in this field, notably the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The General Assembly was the forum, one year ago, for the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and Australia is particularly proud to have been able to play a role in that historic event.

There are many challenges ahead as we work with, and through, the United Nations to reduce global stockpiles of conventional and non-conventional weapons and to make the world a safer and more humane place. Let me single out two. The immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty has repeatedly been identified by the international community as the next major goal for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts, most recently by the parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty — which now has more members than the United Nations itself — at their first preparatory meeting for the sixth Review Conference in 2000.

The Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons also identified an agreement to cease the production of fissile material for nuclear explosive purposes as an important step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. Capping the amount of nuclear material available for nuclear weapons use by extending safeguards coverage over currently unsafeguarded, sensitive nuclear facilities would in itself be a significant achievement for international peace and security, quite apart from its significance as a step towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons.

As I said to the Committee on Disarmament in January this year, the achievement of a fissile material cut-off treaty is a priority objective for Australia, and I now commit Australia to redoubling its efforts to achieve a cut-off treaty at the earliest possible date. We must not allow ourselves to be put off by the obstacles that currently face the achievement of this goal.

The effective elimination of landmines as a weapon of war is another important task facing the United Nations collectively and its members individually. I have been gratified by the gains made to date, through the Ottawa process, through the Inhumane Weapons Convention, through national and regional measures and, perhaps most important, through enhanced contributions to demining and mine-victim assistance programmes to address the terrible human toll of anti-personnel landmines. We owe it to the victims of anti-personnel landmines to continue working through all avenues to achieve a real and lasting solution to the global landmines problem.

The elimination of landmines is one necessary step in creating a more humane world, a world where individual human rights can demand proper respect. But further measures need to be taken involving the establishment of durable national human rights institutions to advance the goals to which our international human rights treaty commitments aspire. We are encouraged by and support the proposal to integrate human rights issues more fully into a range of United Nations activities. In our view, the linkages between respect for human rights, good governance and sustainable development are important. The fact that all four Executive Committees established by the Secretary-General will take human rights issues into account in their deliberations should ensure that more effective coordination is possible across United Nations activities. We warmly welcome also the steps taken by the Secretary General to reform and reinvigorate the Secretariat's organizational structure to support human rights, particularly the consolidation of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Centre for Human Rights into a single office. His appointment of the former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, as High Commissioner for Human Rights is an excellent choice. We pledge ourselves to support her in her task.

Another important recent development at the international level has been the negotiation of a draft statute for an international criminal court. Australia is strongly committed to the early establishment of the court as a major human rights objective. We urge all nations to support by consensus the proposed resolution at this General Assembly calling for the convening of a diplomatic conference in June 1998 to finalize and adopt the statute of the court.

As we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we pay tribute to the universal standards the Declaration has helped to establish. Let us never forget as well that the Declaration, along with the two International Covenants, and the whole body of treaty law and practice that has since developed, was reaffirmed by all nations at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993.

Australia is a nation committed to the advancement of human rights and regards human rights issues as integral to its diplomacy. However, the Australian Government does not want the important area of human rights to become an unproductive battleground or an environment for sloganeering. What we seek is results, not rhetoric, with the outcome being genuine improvements in human rights. The real basis for a sustained improvement in the quality of human rights needs to be through domestic reform founded on working institutions that guarantee participation and accountability. Reform of the institutions of civil governance must come from within. It is not something that can be imposed from outside, for if there is not the political will and the people with the knowledge and a commitment to making those institutions work, then they will simply founder. Almost all nations have dark moments in their history where abuses have occurred, where vigilance has failed. Abuses and corruption are most likely to disappear when there are institutions established to bring light into this darkness.

All too often, however, instead of working patiently to encourage and help others to build these institutions, countries have tended to address issues of human rights by criticism alone. There is no doubt that in the 52 years since the United Nations was established the world has witnessed many egregious and vile acts committed for the most inhumane of reasons, and deserving the strongest condemnation. However, the condemnatory approach alone has only limited practical value.

We need to recognize that in practical terms protecting human rights must primarily be done at the national level. The international human rights system, which we have worked hard to build, inevitably has a broad focus and a limited ability to assist States to implement agreed standards. Regional human rights mechanisms also have a role, and we should do what we can to encourage their establishment and strengthening, including in the Asia-Pacific. However, it is clear that the ability of each State effectively to protect human rights depends to a significant degree on the strength of its own institutions, including a representative legislature, an accountable executive and an independent judiciary. A vigorous civil society is another important element in creating a culture of human rights.

A critical element that has often been undervalued in the national implementation of human rights standards is the importance of effective institutions as a means to achieving good governance. It is this institution-based good governance that offers a real hope of eradicating the randomness and violence that can characterize systems where there is neither popular participation nor genuine accountability.

Good governance creates the environment in which civil and political rights are respected and protected. Good governance also promotes an environment for sound economic management and sustainable use of

resources to increase prosperity. These conditions are important to the protection of economic, social and cultural rights.

At the same time, the exercise of civil and political rights through participatory processes is essential to good governance because it helps ensure governmental accountability and effectiveness. The interlinkages are such that action in one area of human rights has a positive reinforcing effect on other dimensions of human rights, making all human rights indivisible. Accountability, participation and effective institutions are three fundamental principles necessary for the protection of human rights.

It is with all this in mind that Australia gives priority to institution building in the human rights field. One of the most significant developments in recent years has been the spread of national institutions for the promotion of human rights. Such institutions, able to work with Governments and civil society, can reflect to a significant degree the different cultures and local conditions of the societies in which they are established, while remaining consistent with international human rights standards. Moreover, it is worth noting that the General Assembly has endorsed a set of minimum standards for such institutions — the so-called Paris principles. Despite considerable early scepticism, recent experience has been very positive, and many Governments and non-governmental organizations are now looking positively at independent national institutions as an important means to promote and protect human rights. The generally positive view of the work of national institutions held by most States was reflected in the adoption by consensus of Australia's resolution on this subject at this year's session of the Commission on Human Rights, with an increased number of co-sponsors.

Developing countries are showing rapidly increasing interest in establishing or strengthening existing national human rights institutions, as a constructive way to take positive action at the national level, bearing in mind national circumstances, to promote respect for human rights. Important examples of human rights institutions recently established in my part of the world that are making a difference on the ground include those in India and Indonesia. I was encouraged recently by the statement of Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister that he intends to press ahead to establish a human rights commission in the near future.

We will also watch with expectation the development of the proposed Cambodian national human rights commission. A credible and independent human rights commission, along with a genuinely independent national electoral commission, could make an important contribution to protecting stability and promoting the observance of human rights in Cambodia in the lead-up to what we strongly hope will be free, fair and credible elections in May next year.

The work of national institutions in individual countries can be strengthened through subregional and regional arrangements which provide a framework for exchanges of views and experiences. Australia is a strong supporter of the development of such arrangements in the Asia-Pacific region. Since an inaugural meeting in Darwin in 1996 there has been a steady consolidation of links among established and emerging Asia-Pacific human rights commissions. The 1996 meeting saw the commissions of Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and India — later also joined by the Philippines — establish a regional network of human rights commissions, the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, with a supporting Secretariat based in and financed by Australia.

The aim of this network is to strengthen cooperation among national human rights institutions, including through information sharing, staff exchanges, technical cooperation and an annual regional meeting. It also assists other regional Governments wishing to establish such institutions. The most recent regional meeting has just been held, in New Delhi. It attracted participation from the founding human rights commissions as well as that of Sri Lanka. Other regional countries from Asia and the Pacific attended as observers, some of which are considering the establishment of their own human rights commissions.

A most effective area of United Nations operations in this field has been the work of the Special Adviser to the High Commissioner for Human Rights on National Institutions, Regional Arrangements and Preventive Strategies. The United Nations work with a number of Governments, including in our own region, is at an important stage. Australia was therefore pleased to provide additional financial support this year to enable the United Nations to continue to support national institutions.

We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment in his report on the work of the Organization to strengthening cooperation on issues of democratization and good governance. We note his comment that

> "This past year has seen a dramatic increase in activities relating to the establishment of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights." *(A/52/1, para. 30)*

We are heartened by this development and by the responsiveness of the Secretary-General. His report clearly reflects the need I am stressing here for support for national institution-building to be at the centre of United Nations human rights endeavours.

Earlier this year I announced the establishment in Australia of a Centre for Democratic Institutions. This Centre will be devoted to the provision of practical support for the consolidation and strengthening of democratic institutions in developing countries included in Australia's aid programme. It exemplifies a cooperative rather than a conflict approach towards promoting human rights, and it will be the flagship of our good governance initiatives. The focus of the Centre's training programmes will be on electoral, parliamentary, judicial and human rights institution-building and the processes by which broader society, notably the media and community groups, can contribute to democratic decision-making. It will also facilitate visits and secondments of appropriate participants, such as Parliamentarians, senior administrators and other influential persons to relevant Australian organizations.

While human rights remain at risk, our values are compromised and international stability is jeopardized. The protection of human rights to promote the dignity of the individual is too important a matter for symbolic gestures alone. It is only through the pursuit of practical and effective efforts to promote human rights that we show our real commitment to the welfare of individuals and society. And it is vital to such practical outcomes that we orient our approach to human rights to emphasize cooperation and the creation of durable structures.

If I may stay briefly with the subjects of practical outcomes and durable structures, the nations of the world are facing today the threat of climate change and will need to agree later this year in Kyoto on sustainable responses to that threat. At the recent South Pacific Forum, Australia, along with other Forum countries, acknowledged deep concern about the impact of increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases on rising sea levels and changing weather patterns, especially low-lying islands. Australia, along with others, is working hard to ensure that the Kyoto meeting delivers a sustainable environmental outcome. We stand ready to play our part, although, as we have made clear in these negotiations, we have no intention of imposing upon Australians an unfair and disproportionate cost in addressing this global problem.

Before concluding, I should like to address the third and final reform issue I said I would be raising. Australia believes there is an element missing in the present discussion on reform. I am referring to the existing electoral group system, which dates back to the last major reform of the group system in 1963. Since the size of the United Nations has nearly doubled since 1963, mostly with new nations from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, this issue needs to be addressed again.

The present configuration contains many conspicuous anomalies and inequities which constitute powerful arguments for reform. The substantial disparities in the size of the various groups and the inadequate level of representation available to the many subregions, including in our own geographic region of East Asia and the Pacific, has long been an evident source of frustration. Comparisons between the size of the African and East European Groups — embracing 53 and 21 members, respectively — demonstrate the legitimacy of dissatisfaction with the status quo in this regard.

This widespread sense of under-representation is exacerbated by the social and political diversity of the larger groups and the limited extent to which a single member can be said to represent the group as a whole. While we have our own ideas, Australia does not believe it would be helpful to prescribe any rigid formula for reconfiguration of the group system. We acknowledge this is a sensitive issue on which there are many views. But I believe it is time we began to think about and discuss this matter, as we seek to equip the United Nations for the future.

Ultimately, reform of the United Nations means one thing. It means a more efficient organization capable of delivering practical outcomes to the people of the world. If we are to achieve that reform, then we must focus on cooperation, not conflict. We must build institutions which will guarantee effective vigilance, and above all else we must have the courage to abandon the ideas and structures of the past and embrace the changes which bring the future.

Address by The Honourable Kenny D. Anthony, Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia.

The Honourable Kenny D. Anthony, Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, His Excellency The Honourable Kenny D. Anthony, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Anthony (Saint Lucia): My delegation welcomes the experience and expertise which Mr. Hennadiy Udovenko brings to the leadership of this session of the General Assembly, and would like to applaud his predecessor, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, for his outstanding contribution during the fifty-first session.

We feel a quiet sense of elation that the Secretary-General has emerged as the personification of the new possibilities of the United Nations. His recent succession to the distinguished position of Secretary-General of this body is symbolic of the new vision and the new order which heralds our entry into the twenty-first century.

Our historical moment is a defining one. Change has brought us to the stage at which we can either transform or be transformed. All of us — large as well as small nations, individuals as well as Governments — are challenged to make a decisive break with the old ways of doing and seeing things. The people of our planet continue to yearn for justice, equality and fairness. The human spirit continues to thirst for all that is good and beautiful. The soul of humankind is still seeking to reinvent itself in ways that are noble, kind, compassionate and caring. That is the new wave that is beginning to swell on the cusp of the new millennium, and we can discern its gathering momentum in the emotive milestones of the past few months. The expression of universal public grief infused with private intensity over the deaths of Mother Teresa and Diana, Princess of Wales and the donation of $1 billion by Ted Turner to United Nations charitable causes — these are the affirmations of the emergent humanist temperament of the new age.

In these times, this body must welcome the inspiration of those who, by their example, generosity, selflessness and courage, seek to protect the defenceless in a bid to reshape the horizons of our common humanity. It is a global wave sweeping local shores as well as distant ones. In my own tropical corner of our global village, Saint Lucia, on 23 May 1997 the people elected a new Government with a decisive mandate predicated on a vision of hope, change and possibility.

The wave of people's aspirations at the national level is faced with its own counter-turbulence in the conduct of relations among States. Arrayed against this popular impulse for humanism in affairs of state is the assertion of all that has been selfish, greedy and exploitative. The powerful continue to parade their might without any regard for others. They exercise their influence without any compassion, and accumulate their wealth without any charity.

The icons of free trade, market liberalization and economic liberalism represent the hardening of the arteries of human conscience in the sphere of commerce. The movement away from concerns of social and economic justice to the preoccupation with market forces and economic rationality is leading inexorably to a new world order at odds with the impulse of the world's billions for a more caring and compassionate world.

At the level of the international system, we are witnessing a rolling back of the structures of social responsibility, the progressive erosion of the capacity to respond and the annihilation of the will to act humanely. We see the inability to care for the welfare of the people, the apathy towards their growing material deprivation and, most frighteningly, the calculated institutional insensitivity to the plight of the disadvantaged who wish to continue to earn with dignity and by the sweat of their brows.

There is no better example of this callous disregard than the situation facing the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, and in particular the banana producers of the Caribbean. Only last month, the small banana-producing countries of the Caribbean Community received a particularly harsh and crushing blow, when the appeals board of the World Trade Organization (WTO) upheld an earlier finding that the preferential treatment accorded in the European market to bananas of the

Member States of the ACP contravened World Trade Organization rules on free trade.

The intent behind the current move towards globalization as manifested in the World Trade Organization is evidently most commendable. Indeed, Saint Lucia was among the founding members of the WTO. We were led to believe that the World Trade Organization would help raise the living standards of our peoples and, by emulating the ideals of the United Nations, would promote fairness in world trade. It was our hope that it would end, once and for all, the law of the jungle as the dominant feature of international commercial relations. In short, it was hoped that the WTO would establish a standard of arbitration premised on fairness, civilized negotiation of vital interests and the inculcation of equity in international trade and commerce.

The WTO ruling on the European banana regime is nothing short of a capitulation to the machinations of those who are blinkered by free trade and sheer greed. We speak in these strong terms because the world community must understand that the WTO, and the complainants to the European banana regime, completely and steadfastly ignored the fact that the import of its ruling is the economic and social destruction of a number of small Member States of this body that together enjoy a miniscule 2.5 per cent of the world trade in bananas and only 5 per cent of the European market.

Consider for a moment the flaws in the process through which the WTO's dispute settlement body sought to resolve this issue. The initial panel did not have a single representative from a developing country, although the matter was of utmost importance to developing countries. To render fair play even more remote, the appellate board was chaired by an American, despite the fact that the principal complainant was the United States of America. While that may have been permissible under the rules, surely good sense and fairness should have dictated that it was nothing but highly improper and undesirable. But then, even the nature of the major complainant was improper: the United States of America does not produce a single banana for export. Yet, while it activated and participated in the proceedings, we, the banana-producing countries, were denied the right to full participation and were relegated to the sidelines as spectators.

The WTO has dismally failed to match up to the commendable goals which inspired its creation. The implementation of the ruling will bring about a generalized reduction in the living standards of our peoples and an acceleration of poverty.

Far from providing reassurance of a civilized approach to resolving world trade disputes, the ruling leaves a lingering suspicion that "might" will always be "right" and that the strong and powerful will always be able to use the system to achieve their own ends, regardless of the human dislocation and suffering that result.

If the World Trade Organization is to be of any value to us small, developing countries, there must be a fundamental reform of its system of dispute settlement. This is essential, because the implications of the scope of the ruling on bananas are not confined to bananas. The ruling raises questions about other import arrangements for agricultural goods as well as the future of trade and development cooperation agreements between rich and poor countries. The real challenge to the WTO is not how effective its Dispute Settlement Body can be in rigidly applying the letter of its regulations, but, rather, whether the process by which decisions are arrived at is perceived as being fair. The system must be reformed so that it takes account of the consequences of the implementation of its rulings. It must of necessity consider the impact of its decisions, particularly when, as in the case of the ruling on the banana regime, the affected countries have small, vulnerable and fragile economies.

Trade and development must, in the final analysis, be about the development of people. Therefore, the WTO criteria for settling disputes must be redesigned to take into account social, health, cultural and environmental issues. If national security issues can be raised as a reason why the law of one powerful country should not be brought before WTO jurisdiction, then why should the WTO not take into account the special social and economic circumstances of small, vulnerable countries in its dispute deliberations? What is the point of the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body rigidly applying rules, when in so doing it takes decisions which are in direct contrast to the very principles which justify its existence? In such a situation the principles become worthless and the organization becomes amenable to manipulation.

We do not seek international charity for our banana farmers. We seek only fairness and opportunity. We are not irrevocably opposed to free trade, but we need fair trade. We are a proud people seeking to earn our living in as honest a manner as the wealth of nations permits.

The nations of the European Union entered into a partnership for development with us when, together, we signed the Lomé Convention. We call upon them not to cast aside their solemn commitments and obligations under that Convention, as they respond to those who want this most unfair ruling by the World Trade Organization implemented immediately and in its entirety. We are heartened by the statements made so far by the European Commission expressing the European Union's deep concern about the negative political, economic and social effects of the WTO ruling on a number of countries from the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States. We take comfort from the Commission's expression of its intention to take these factors into account, and to stand by the European Union's international obligations and the principles of its development policy. We also welcome the statements of support for Caribbean banana producers from the European Parliament and its call for the revision of the criteria used by the WTO in the resolution of trade disputes. We look forward to working with the European Union to find a formula which will allow us continued access to the banana market in a manner which will permit our farmers to continue earning a decent and dignified living. We urge the European Union to be steadfast in protecting the spirit and substance of its obligations under the Lomé Convention, to remain committed to ensuring development and equity in international economic relations, and to remain faithful to its ACP friends.

Such are the challenges confronting those who are small and weak, yet proud. It is within such a context of an uncertain international system that my country has to shape its foreign policy. The changing characteristics of the international system have necessitated that we redefine the boundaries of our alliances. We must look beyond the sea of uncertainty to the mountains of possibility. The contemporary confluence of forces challenges us to create new relationships to assist in our social and economic development. Having been forced out of our traditional partnerships, we must find new friends and reconstruct relationships. In this process, we must be guided by the imperative of finding and mobilizing new sources of investment that are predicated on creating new paths to sustainable growth.

For us, foreign policy is about building bridges to other people, other cultures and other markets. It is about contributing to the emergence of a new climate of tolerance and international understanding; it is about matching domestic need with international possibility. Consistent with these basic principles, Saint Lucia has proceeded in a direction in which the majority of the States of the world have already gone by establishing diplomatic links with the People's Republic of China.

Saint Lucia will always cherish the principles of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and the rule of international law. All countries, regardless of size, must have the comfort of these irrevocable principles and be secure in the confidence that the conduct of nations will be guided by them.

It is in the context of these basic principles that we urge the United States of America to re-examine some of its recent policies towards the States of the Caribbean. Its lead role in the challenge to our banana marketing regime has damaged our peoples' confidence in its declarations of friendship. Its new immigration laws are causing apprehension and dislocation for thousands of persons who originated from the Caribbean, and is eroding the bridges between our peoples. The imminent deportation of persons who have lived for decades in the United States will create a humanitarian problem of mass proportions. This is no longer a domestic matter. The consequences for the human rights of those affected have transformed it into a subject for international concern.

In addition, the deportation of persons who have become hardened criminals to lands they do not know as home is further rocking the social and economic fabric of our democracies. If there is a law of unintended consequences, the United States of America must accept the negative repercussions of its policies. It must therefore embark on corrective action to undo the damage which these policies have unleashed on the peoples of the Caribbean community.

It is our concern for fairness, equity and democratization in the conduct of international relations that has caused Saint Lucia to embrace and support the process of reform of the United Nations itself. Saint Lucia firmly believes that if the United Nations is to adequately address the challenges of the coming century, then three things must happen.

First, Member States must honour their financial obligations to the body. Saint Lucia continues to believe that the United Nations financial crisis can be alleviated if all Member States, large and small, rich and poor, do so in a timely manner, without conditions. A United Nations that is financially weak, that lurches from one budget crisis to another, is in no condition to confront and overcome the challenges facing mankind. If there is to be financial reform, then the precarious financial

existence of the United Nations must be consigned to the dustbin of history.

Secondly, the United Nations itself must take steps to become more efficient and effective. We need a United Nations where waste is abhorred, where the churning out of documents for documents' sake, at a cost of millions of dollars, is no longer a priority. We need a United Nations that is leaner, but more capable of making the maximum use of its resources.

Thirdly, the United Nations must become more responsive to the needs of all its Member States. For the majority of the United Nations Member States, the need is for sustainable development, for the eradication of poverty and of illiteracy. We need a United Nations that will show an even greater sensitivity to those needs.

The United Nations must also answer the call for wider representation of the world peoples on the Security Council. Saint Lucia wishes to reiterate its support for an increase in the membership of the Security Council to reflect the universal membership of the General Assembly and to ensure the balanced representation of the developing world.

Saint Lucia applauds the initiatives of the Secretary-General in his proposals to reform the United Nations to inspire greater confidence in its potential. Saint Lucia is particularly interested in the proposed "dividend for development", and welcomes the idea that a large portion of United Nations resources should be allocated to development, particularly to meet the needs of developing countries. It is our hope, however, that this proposed "dividend for development" will not become like the peace dividend — a noble idea that is yet to materialize.

It is a moral responsibility of those who are strong to protect the weak and vulnerable. The international community, through the United Nations, must accept its responsibility to establish and maintain mechanisms that will protect the small, vulnerable economies of this world as they seek to build sustainable economies for the twenty-first century.

Saint Lucia has begun to do its part through the diversification of its economic base, through action to reduce unemployment, poverty, population growth and to improve the educational standards of our peoples. We, too, want to be better placed to exploit the new employment opportunities provided by the revolution in information and communications technology. But the United Nations must also play its part by not forgetting that small island developing States like Saint Lucia have peculiar needs that it must be vigilant to protect.

We applaud the work being carried out by the Commonwealth on updating its report on the vulnerability of small States and in revising the Vulnerability Index of Small States, and we welcome the new report, "A Future for Small States Overcoming Vulnerability".

Saint Lucia notes the preparation being made for the special session of the General Assembly in 1999 to review outstanding chapters and issues of the Barbados Programme of Action. However, we must express our disappointment over the lack of progress in implementing the Programme of Action, and Saint Lucia urges the international community to support the mobilization of external resources to implement the plan.

In recent times, the vulnerability of small States to natural disasters could not have been more clearly demonstrated than in the case of the Caribbean island of Montserrat, whose very existence is threatened by an intermittently raging volcano. Since the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, the situation in Montserrat has deteriorated. Half of the island's population has had to flee. The plight of the people of Montserrat is a human tragedy that the world ignores because, once again, its setting is another small island State which seems to be in a remote corner of the international community. The people of Montserrat badly need sympathy, understanding and support.

The establishment of a Caribbean family of nations is a historical imperative for Saint Lucia. For this reason, we shall continue to strengthen the integration process in the Caribbean and the closer association of our peoples. We have a vision of the entire Caribbean Basin merging as one nation, becoming one family, irrespective of the division of language, size, trade and political traditions and relationships. We may be small, but we are making our contribution to the enhancement of civilization.

The noble ideals and goals of the United Nations and its Charter will be meaningless if the international community fails to protect small, vulnerable developing countries like Saint Lucia from the predatory actions of those who seek to destroy the livelihood of our peoples in the name of free trade. These lofty goals will be hollow if, in the rush to espouse globalization and the liberalization of trade, the special circumstances of the smaller, poorer States of this world are scorned, and

their special needs are bulldozed and smashed by the injustice of international tribunals and the myopia of richer States.

Saint Lucia does not wish to be trapped in a cycle of dependence. It merely wishes to be given the opportunity to be self-sustaining in this global order.

The noble aspirations of the United Nations will rank among the greatest failures of the twentieth century if, by failing to be involved in the control of the process of globalization, it allows its smaller, poorer Members to be marginalized. The goal of sustainable development must not be allowed to become yet another myth of our times.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I thank the Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Kenny D. Anthony, Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Planning, Information and the Public Service of Saint Lucia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Rwanda, His Excellency Mr. Anastase Gasana.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda) (*interpretation from French*): Before delivering the message of the Government of Rwanda to the General Assembly, allow me to follow the Heads of State and fellow Ministers who have spoken from this rostrum and express to the President our very sincere congratulations on his outstanding election. We also pay a well-deserved tribute to his eminent predecessor, who displayed devotion, skill and readiness to serve during the last session.

Our warmest and fraternal congratulations also go to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for whom this session of the General Assembly is his first in that office.

At the fiftieth anniversary session of the United Nations we took the opportunity to express loudly and clearly our views with regard to the essential reforms to be carried out within the United Nations. We welcome the proposals made by the Secretary-General, and we assure him of our support and cooperation. We also made proposals on Security Council reform. We will continue to make our contribution and lend our support to the collective efforts aimed at ensuring greater democracy in the Council.

The Government of Rwanda also wishes to take this opportunity to express its great satisfaction at the appointment of Mrs. Mary Robinson as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We assure both her and the Secretary-General of our assistance and cooperation.

At this session the Government of Rwanda wishes to make its modest contribution to our consideration of some matters of concern both to Africa and to the entire international community. These primarily relate to the difficulties encountered in the process of bringing to life a new Africa and problems related to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts in Africa. We shall also offer some thoughts on how our peoples may enjoy a relatively smooth passage into the next millennium. We will conclude with an appeal for international solidarity for Rwanda and the Rwandan people.

The hope of the peoples of Africa and the third world is first of all for an understanding of their real problems, and today that understanding must be a priority. Much of the international community supports the new political order in Africa and the new African leadership and leaders who wish to create new realities for a new Africa. We had the opportunity and pleasure, at the special meeting of the Security Council on Africa held on 25 September under the presidency of the Secretary of State of the United States, of hearing comments in support of the new African leadership. We stand firmly together. The others, those who do not trust in Africa and the Africans, who attempt to hinder our continent's efforts to free itself from neocolonialism and dictatorships, who are today trying to discredit and undermine our leaders at any cost, they are the ones we will obviously be forced to deal with when we come to them.

I should like now to speak of the problems of conflict prevention and conflict resolution in Africa and other third world countries. Again, we extend our warmest thanks to the Security Council for having taken the positive initiative of convening a ministerial-level meeting on Africa on 25 September.

Our contribution, beyond general considerations and some specific cases, will focus primarily on identifying the underlying causes of conflicts in Africa, conflicts

which in turn create the economic and political recessions of which we in our continent — and elsewhere in certain third world countries as well — are aware on almost a daily basis.

Africa and the third world in general are suffering from various ills, principal among which are ignorance, poverty, bad political leadership, *coups d'état* and foreign intervention. Those are the ills that have eaten away at Africa, continue to eat away at it and are the sources of every conflict on our continent.

Ignorance, it is said, is the root of all evils. Poverty is the cause of all misfortune. What United Nations programme will combat ignorance and poverty in Africa and the countries of the third world, and when will these two terrible ills that ravage our continent be cured?

Bad political leadership in Africa has led many countries to ruin and even led to the first genocide on the African continent, which occurred in Rwanda from April to July 1994. The United Nations was present with a military force of 2,500 men, who packed up and left, abandoning the Rwandan people to the mercy of the Interahamwe militiamen of the erstwhile single party and armed forces of the day. The planning and carrying out of the genocide was the ignoble act of a bad political leadership that viewed the ignorance and poverty of the peoples of Rwanda — and, consequently, of the peoples of Africa and the third world — as a political asset to consolidate and perpetuate its dictatorship in power or to usurp power.

We hope that the United Nations will support the new political order in Africa and its new leadership, and that it will oppose any manoeuvre aimed at using United Nations structures to nip in the bud the new political order that is emerging on our continent.

The conflicts of which we are all aware in Africa today are the bitter fruit of the famous so-called Africa of the Generals that emerged in the mid-1960s. Those *coups d'état* sapped Africa with all their attendant tragedies, of which all here are only too keenly aware. What are our strategies for fighting *coups d'état* in Africa today? What are the strategies of the United Nations for eradicating this scourge, whose effects are realized by its creators only when they themselves fall victim to it?

All of the *coups d'état* in Africa since 1965, whose rotten fruits we are harvesting today, were fomented by certain Western capitals in their own interests and to the detriment of the African people. Today, unfortunately, foreign manipulation is continuing in Africa, creating a new cycle of *coups d'état* in Africa.

We urge the United Nations resolutely to attack the five scourges I have just named, which still infect Africa and are the source of all the conflicts on our continent. These problems exist and we are familiar with them. Let us not make them taboo — let us talk about them within this prestigious building; let us talk about them in the Security Council. That, perhaps, would mark the beginning of improved conflict prevention and resolution in Africa.

We cannot close this chapter on African conflicts without referring specifically to some that worry us more than others. I am referring in particular to the Central African Republic, where we feel the United Nations should be on its toes and assist a country in which the keepers of the old order and their opportunistic acolytes are using violence against an elected Government. I am also referring to Congo (Brazzaville), where precisely the same scenario as in the Central African Republic is being played out on a scale far larger than in the latter country.

In our humble opinion, the United Nations should also send a clear and unambiguous message to the Comorians of the island of Anjouan that the Comoros is a State Member of the United Nations and that its unity and integrity are not negotiable. We ask the parties concerned to work with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to find an appropriate solution to their problem.

Western Sahara strikes a strong note of hope in the area of decolonization. We welcome and encourage the due implementation of the agreements that have just been signed between the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Morocco to promote the process of self-determination and independence for the Saharan people.

In Somalia, the Government of the Rwandese Republic urges all the parties to the conflict to promote dialogue under the aegis of the OAU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

Two years from the advent of the new millennium, we all have the ultimate duty of leading our peoples to the year 2000 without setback or fear of the unknown, unlike the people of the year 997 as they approached the eve of the second millennium.

The twentieth century, leading into the awaited third millennium, has deeded to us the two most horrendous genocides in the history of humanity: the genocide of the Jews during the Second World War and the genocide of the Rwandans in 1994. Will we cross the threshold of the third millennium with the same racist graffiti covering the walls of our cities and airport corridors? Will those with uneasy consciences continue forever to play dumb with regard to the Rwandan genocide, the very first in the history of our continent? Will religious fundamentalism thrive at the cost of human lives?

Extreme selfishness, despair, suicide, racism, crime, terrorism, drugs, paedophilia, battered women, rape: Are we going to bring all this luggage with us into the third millennium? What are we doing now? What are our strategies to eradicate all these evils? Resignation? Fatalism? Will the third millennium hold anything to shock us?

We all claim to govern on behalf of our respective peoples. What actions are we undertaking today to ensure that they advance calmly, smoothly, without panic or anxiety into the year 2000? If we do nothing, how will we explain it to them on the eve of 1 January 2000 or on the first day of the year 2000? Will we use the language of cynicism, pain, realism, politics, diplomacy or ritual — in just enough to get them off our backs and hustle them along into the year 2000 as into a lifeboat?

What strategies do the United Nations and its agencies, present throughout Africa and other countries of the third world, have to help the Governments and peoples that must confront the anxieties of passing from one century to another, one millennium to another? In my country, Rwanda, I see no sign of any such strategy, while the country is gripped by the many traumas born from the tearing, or rather the shredding, of the social fabric by the genocide of 1994. When the traumas of genocide are complemented by millennial anxieties, what is to become of such a people if it is not helped by increased international solidarity?

I have seen no or almost no sign of such solidarity in all my travels, no hint of such a project. Apparently, no one is concerned. And yet, we are only 26 months from 1 January 2000. Why such indifference from countries and from the United Nations? Should not our concerns be those of the peoples on whose behalf we govern? We should be one step ahead and thereby allay them.

Before closing, I wish to appeal to the General Assembly that the United Nations adopt a mini-Marshall Plan for the moral and physical rehabilitation and reconstruction of the first African country to have fallen victim to the catastrophe of genocide: Rwanda. This mini-Marshall Plan for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of post-genocide Rwanda was drafted by Ambassador Sahnoun, Special Representative for the Great Lakes region of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the OAU, at the request of the Rwandan Government of National Unity.

We also make a ringing appeal to the United Nations and the entire international community to provide Rwanda with substantial assistance, as it has received since November 1996 more than 1.4 million repatriated persons — one fifth of its population — who had fled to the former Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania and Burundi. Following this mass return of refugees, famine has today struck heavily in over four of our provinces. For the victims of this famine, we request emergency food relief and development assistance for every sector of national life — agriculture, health, education, the social and socio-economic reintegration of the repatriated, the survivors of genocide, justice and the rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic infrastructures, including those for water, electricity and roads.

As for the social and socio-economic reintegration of the repatriated, since November 1996 the Rwandan Government has been sending into the field teams led by two Ministers for each province and composed of other ministers, members of Parliament and high-level administrators. These field missions aim at supporting the local administrative authorities in their tasks of receiving and reintegrating the repatriates. The exercise has gone well and is still being successfully pursued.

At the communal and municipal level, we have also created reception committees composed of local authorities and members of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Unfortunately, some troublemakers have filtered in with the 1.4 million refugees who have recently returned to Rwanda. Since February 1997, these fugitives have been committing murders among the civilian population. They have primarily targeted the survivors of genocide, in order to do away with anyone who might be a witness in a court of law, and local authorities who are devoted to the cause of national unity and reconciliation.

The Rwandan Government has taken the necessary measures to ensure the safety of the people in the north of the country, which has been the site of these murders. Again, results in this area have also been quite satisfactory.

In fact, a month ago I organized a meeting of the entire diplomatic and consular community at Ruhengeri, one of the provinces in the north of the country. After that meeting the diplomats had the opportunity to visit any areas of Ruhengeri they chose.

Likewise, before I came to New York for the General Assembly, Mr. Pasteur Bizimungu, President of the Republic of Rwanda, headed a meeting of ministers at Gisenyi, one of the country's three northern provinces. After the meeting the President of the Republic and the members of the Government went into the field for three days. They visited and spoke with people from all sectors of the population, including peasants on communes and in municipalities and students and State officials who had been repatriated and who were participating in orientation seminars on the positive aspects of national unity, tolerance, reconciliation, respect for human life and solidarity. They also spoke with local authorities who are working to train our people.

The Government of Rwanda needs support for this exercise. It needs the assistance of the international community.

Before concluding, we would like to say from this lofty rostrum that we welcome the progress made towards resolving the misunderstanding on the question of the International Commission of Inquiry sent to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo announced at his press conference yesterday afternoon.

The Rwandan Government therefore encourages those specifically involved in this matter — namely, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — to work together to put an end to this problem. They have our confidence and support.

In order to support the efforts of the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Refugees and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to enlighten better the international community about the refugee problem in eastern Zaire, the Rwandan Government calls on the United Nations to publish and circulate as a document of the Security Council the report of the International Commission of Inquiry on the trafficking in and distribution of weapons in refugee camps in eastern Zaire.

The United Nations International Commission of Inquiry was established under Security Council resolution 1013 (1995) of 7 September 1995. The Commission submitted its report, duly signed by its members, one year later, on 28 October 1996. The embargo on this report, which has hindered its publication, should be lifted immediately in order to facilitate everyone's efforts.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.